CARACTACUS,

A

Dramatic Poem.

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Mason (William) Poet
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Dramatic Poem:

Written on the MODEL of

The Ancient GREEK Tragedy.

By the Author of ELFRIDA.

Miſimus & lectas Druidum de gente Chorëas.

THE SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
Printed for J. KNAPTON in Ludgate-Street;
and R. and J. DODSLEY in Pall-Mall.
MDCCLIX.

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TO

The Rev^d Mr HURD.

ELEGY.

FRIEND of my youth, who, when the willing Muſe
Stream'd o'er my breaſt her warm poetic rays,
Saw'ſt the freſh ſeeds their vital powers diffuſe,
And fed'ſt them with the foſt'ring dew of praiſe!
Whate'er the produce of th' unthrifty ſoil,
The leaves, the flowers, the fruits, to thee belong:
The labourer earns the wages of his toil;
Who form'd the Poet, well may claim the ſong.
Yes, 'tis my pride to own, that taught by thee
My conſcious ſoul ſuperior flights eſſay'd;
Learnt from thy lore the Poet's dignity,
And ſpurn'd the hirelings of the rhyming trade.
Say, ſcenes of Science, ſay, thou haunted ſtream!
[For oft' my Muſe-led ſteps did'ſt thou behold]
How on thy banks I rifled every theme,
That Fancy fabled in her age of gold.
How oft' I cry'd, "O come, thou tragic Queen!
"March from thy Greece with firm majeſtic tread!
"Such as when Athens ſaw thee fill her ſcene,
"When Sophocles they choral Graces led:

" Saw thy proud pall it's purple length devolve,
" Saw thee uplift the glitt'ring dagger high,
" Ponder with fixed brow thy deep reſolve
" Prepar'd to ſtrike, to triumph, and to die.
" Bring then to Britain's plain that choral throng,
" Diſplay thy buſkin'd pomp, thy golden lyre,
" Give her hiſtoric forms the ſoul of ſong,
" And mingle Attic art with Shakeſpear's fire."
" Ah what fond boy, doſt thou preſume to claim?"
The Muſe reply'd. " Miſtaken ſuppliant, know,
" To light in Shakeſpear's breaſt the dazzling flame
" Exhauſted all Parnaſſus could beſtow.
" True, Art remains; and, if from his bright page
" Thy mimic power one vivid beam can ſeize,
" Proceed; and in that beſt of taſks engage,
" Which tends at once to profit, and to pleaſe."
She ſpake; and Hartewood's Towers ſpontaneous roſe;
Soft virgin warblings eccho'd thro' the grove;
And fair Elfrida pour'd forth all her woes,
The hapleſs pattern of connubial Love.
More awful ſcenes old Mona next diſplay'd;
Her caverns gloom'd, her foreſts wav'd on high,
While flam'd within their conſecrated ſhade
The Genius ſtern of Britiſh liberty.
And ſee, my HURD! to thee, thoſe ſcenes con-
ſign'd;
O! take and ſtamp them with thy honour'd name.
Around the page be friendſhip's chaplet twin'd,
And, if they find the road to honeſt Fame,

Perchance the candour of ſome nobler age
May praiſe the Bard, who bad gay Folly bear
* Her cheap applauſes to the buſy ſtage
And leave him penſive Virtue's ſilent tear;
Choſe too to conſecrate his fav'rite ſtrain
To Him, who grac'd by ev'ry liberal art,
That beſt might ſhine amid the learned train,
Yet more excell'd in morals, and in heart:
Whoſe equal mind could ſee vain fortune ſhower
Her flimzy favours on the fawning crew,
While in low Thurcaſton's ſequeſter'd bower
She fixt him diſtant from Promotion's view:
Yet, ſhelter'd there by calm Contentment's wing;
Pleas'd he could ſmile, and with ſage HOOKER's eye
† "See from his mother earth God's bleſſings ſpring
"And eat his bread in peace and privacy."

20 March 1759.

W. MASON.

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* Nil equidem feci (tu ſcis hoc ipſe) Theatris;
Muſa nec in plauſus ambitioſa mea eſt.
OVID. Trift. Lib. V. El. vii. 23.

† Part of a ſentence in a letter of Hooker to Archbiſhop Whitgift. See his Life in the Biographia Britannica.

Perſons of the DRAMA.

AULUS DIDIUS, the Roman General.

VELLINUS, } Sons of Cartiſmandua.
ELIDURUS, }

* CHORUS of Druids and Bards.

CARACTACUS.

EVELINA, Daughter to Caractacus.

ARVIRAGUS, Son to Caractacus.

Scene, MONA.

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* The Dramatic part of the Chorus is ſuppoſed to be ſpoken by the chief Druid; the lyrical part ſung by the Bards.

CARACTACUS,

A

Dramatic Poem.

AULUS DIDIUS, with Romans.

THIS is the ſecret centre of the iſle:
Here, Romans, pauſe, and let the eye of wonder
Gaze on the ſolemn ſcene; behold yon oak,
How ſtern he frowns, and with his broad brown arms
Chills the pale plain beneath him: mark yon altar,
The dark ſtream brawling round it's rugged baſe,
Theſe cliffs, theſe yawning caverns, this wide circus,
Skirted with unhewn ſtone: they awe my ſoul,
As if the very Genius of the place
Himſelf appear'd, and with terrific tread
Stalk'd thro' his drear domain. And yet, my friends,
(If ſhapes like his be but the fancy's coinage)
Surely there is a hidden power, that reigns
'Mid the lone majeſty of untam'd nature,
Controuling ſober reaſon; tell me elſe,
Why do theſe haunts of barb'rous ſuperſtition
O'ercome me thus? I ſcorn them, yet they awe me.
Call forth the Britiſh Princes: in this gloom
I mean to ſchool them to our enterprize.

Enter Vellinus and Elidurus.

AULUS DIDIUS, VELLINUS, ELIDURUS.

Ye pledges dear of Cartiſmandua's faith,
Approach! and to my uninſtructed ear
Explain this ſcene of horror.

ELIDURUS.

Daring Roman,
Thy footſteps preſs on conſecrated ground:
Theſe mighty piles of magic-planted rock,
Thus rang'd in myſtic order, mark the place
Where but at times of holieſt feſtival
The Druid leads his train.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Where dwells the ſeer?

VELLINUS.

In yonder ſhaggy cave; on which the moon
Now ſheds a ſide-long gleam. His brotherhood
Poſſeſs the neighb'ring cliffs.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Yet up the hill
Mine eye deſcrys a diſtant range of caves,
Delv'd in the ridges of the craggy ſteep:
And this way ſtill another.

ELIDURUS.

On the left
Reſide the Sages ſkill'd in Nature's lore:
The changeful univerſe, it's numbers, powers,
Studious they meaſure, ſave when meditation
Gives place to holy rites: then in the grove
Each hath his rank and function. Yonder grots
Are tenanted by Bards, who nightly thence,

Rob'd in their flowing veſts of innocent white,
Deſcend, with harps that glitter to the moon,
Hymning immortal ſtrains. The ſpirits of air,
Of earth, of water, nay of heav'n itſelf,
Do liſten to their lay: and oft, 'tis ſaid,
In viſible ſhapes dance they a magic round
To the high minſtrelſy. Now, if thine eye
Be ſated with the view, haſte to thy ſhips;
And ply thine oars; for, if the Druids learn
This bold intruſion, thou wilt find it hard
To foil their fury.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Prince, I did not moor
My light-arm'd ſhallops on this dangerous ſtrand,
To ſooth a fruitleſs curioſity:
I come in queſt of proud Caractacus;
Who, when our veterans put his troops to flight,
Found refuge here.

ELIDURUS.

If here the Monarch reſts,
Preſumptuous Chief! thou might'ſt as well eſſay
To pluck him from yon ſtars: Earth's ample range
Contains no ſurer refuge: underneath
The ſoil we tread, a hundred ſecret paths,
Scoopt thro' the living rock in winding maze,
Lead to as many caverns, dark, and deep:
'Mid which the hoary ſages act their rites
Myſterious, rites of ſuch ſtrange potency,
As, done in open day, would dim the ſun,

Tho' thron'd in noontide brightneſs. In ſuch dens
He may for life lie hid.

AULUS DIDIUS.

We know the taſk
Moſt difficult: yet has thy royal mother
Furniſh'd the means.

ELIDURUS.

My mother ſayſt thou, Roman?

AULUS DIDIUS.

In proof of that firm faith ſhe lends to Rome,
She gave ye up her honour's hoſtages.

ELIDURUS.

She did; and we ſubmit.

AULUS DIDIUS.

To Rome we bear ye;
From your dear country bear ye; from your joys,
Your loves, your friendſhips, all your ſouls hold precious.

ELIDURUS.

And doſt thou taunt us, Roman, with our fate?

AULUS DIDIUS.

No, Youth, by heav'n, I would avert that fate.
Wiſh ye for liberty?

VELLINUS, ELIDURUS.

More than for life.

AULUS DIDIUS.

And would do much to gain it?

VELLINUS.

Name the taſk.

AULUS DIDIUS.

The taſk is eaſy. Haſte ye to theſe Druids:
Tell them ye come, commiſſion'd by your Queen,
To ſeek the great Caractacus; and call
His valour to her aid, againſt the Legions,
Which, led by our Oſtorius, now aſſail
Her frontiers. The late treaty ſhe has ſeal'd
Is yet unknown: and this her royal ſignet,
Which more to maſk our purpoſe was obtain'd,
Shall be your pledge of faith. The eager king
Will gladly take the charge; and, he conſenting,
What elſe remains, but to the Meinaï's ſhore
Ye lead his credulous ſtep? there will we ſeize him:
Bear him to Rome, the ſubſtitute for you,
And give you back to freedom.

VELLINUS.

If the Druids—

AULUS DIDIUS.

If they, or he, prevent this artifice,
Then force muſt take it's way: then flaming brands,
And biting axes, weilded by our ſoldiers,
Muſt level theſe thick ſhades; and ſo unlodge
The lurking ſavage.

ELIDURUS.

Gods, ſhall Mona periſh?

AULUS DIDIUS.

Princes, her ev'ry trunk ſhall on the ground
Meaſure it's magnitude; unleſs ere dawn,
Ye lure this untam'd lion to our toils.
Go then, and proſper; I ſhall to the ſhips,

And there expect his coming. Youths, remember,
He muſt to Rome to grace great Cæſar's triumph:
Cæſar and Fate demand him at your hands.

Exeunt Aulus Didius, and Romans.

ELIDURUS, VELLINUS.

And will heav'n ſuffer it? Will the juſt gods,
That tread yon ſpangled pavement o'er our heads,
Look from their ſky and yield him? Will theſe Druids,
Their ſage vicegerents, not call down the thunder;
And will not inſtant it's hot bolts be darted
In ſuch a righteous cauſe? Yes, good old king,
Yes, laſt of Britons, thou art heav'n's own pledge;
And ſhalt be ſuch 'till death.

VELLINUS.

What means my brother,
Doſt thou refuſe the charge?

ELIDURUS.

Doſt thou accept it?

VELLINUS.

It gives us liberty.

ELIDURUS.

It makes us traytors.
Gods, would Vellinus do a deed of baſeneſs?

VELLINUS.

Will Elidurus ſcorn the profer'd boon
Of freedom?

ELIDURUS.

Yes, when ſuch it's guilty price,
Brother, I ſpurn it.

VELLINUS.

Go then, fooliſh boy!
I'll do the deed myſelf.

ELIDURUS.

It ſhall not be:
I will proclaim the fraud.

VELLINUS.

Wilt thou? 'tis well.
Hie to yon cave; call loudly on the Druid;
And bid him drag to ignominious death
The partner of thy blood. Yet hope not thou
To 'ſcape; for thou didſt join my impious ſteps:
Therefore his wrath ſhall curſe thee: thou ſhalt live;
Yet ſhalt thou live an interdicted wretch,
All rights of nature cancell'd.

ELIDURUS.

O Vellinus!
Rend not my ſoul: by heav'n thou know'ſt I love thee,
As fervently as brother e'er lov'd brother:
And, loving thee, I thought I lov'd mine honour.
Ah! do not wake, dear youth, in this true breaſt
So fierce a conflict.

VELLINUS.

Honour's voice commands
Thou ſhouldſt obey thy mother, and thy queen.
Honour and ſage religion both conſpire
To bid thee ſave theſe conſecrated groves
From Roman devaſtation.

ELIDURUS.

Horrid thought!
Hence let us haſte, ev'n to the furtheſt nook
Of this wide iſle; nor view the ſacrilege.

VELLINUS.

No, let us ſtay, and by our proſperous art
Prevent the ſacrilege. Mark me, my brother,
More years, and more experience have matur'd
My ſober thought; I will convince thy youth,
That this our deed has ev'ry honeſt ſanction,
Cool reaſon may demand.

ELIDURUS.

To Rome with reaſon:
Try if 'twill bring her deluging ambition
Into the level courſe of right and juſtice:
Try if 'twill tame theſe inſolent invaders;
Who thus, in ſavageneſs of conqueſt, claim
Whom chance of war has ſpar'd. Do this, and proſper.
But, pray thee, do not reaſon from my ſoul
It's inbred honeſty: that holy flame
Howe'er eclips'd by Rome's black influence
In vulgar minds, ought ſtill to glow in ours.

VELLINUS.

Vain talker leave me.

ELIDURUS.

No, I will not leave thee:
I muſt not, dare not, in theſe perilous ſhades.
Think, if thy fraud ſhould fail, theſe holy men,
How will their juſtice rend thy traitrous limbs?
If thou ſucceed'ſt, the fiercer pangs of conſcience,

How will they ever goad thy guilty ſoul?
Mercy, defend us! ſee, the awful Druids
Are iſſuing from their caves: hear'ſt thou yon ſignal?
Lo, on the inſtant all the mountain whitens
With ſlow-deſcending Bards. Retire, retire;
This is the hour of ſacrifice: to ſtay
Is death.

VELLINUS.

I'll wait the cloſing of their rites
In yonder vale: do thou, as likes thee beſt,
Betray, or aid me.

ELIDURUS.

To betray thee, youth,
That love forbids; honour, alas! to aid thee.

Exeunt.

Enter CHORUS.

SEMICHORUS.

Sleep and Silence reign around;
Not a night-breeze wakes to blow;
Circle, ſons, this holy ground;
Circle cloſe, in triple row;
And, if maſk'd in vapors drear,
Any earth-born Spirit dare
To hover round this ſacred ſpace,
Haſte with light ſpells the murky foe to chace.
Lift your boughs of vervain blue,
Dipt in cold September dew;
And daſh the moiſture chaſte, and clear,
O'er the ground, and thro' the air.
Now the place is purg'd and pure.

Brethren! ſay, for this high hour
Are the milk-white ſteers prepar'd?
Whoſe necks the rude yoke never ſcar'd,
To the furrow yet unbroke?
For ſuch muſt bleed beneath yon oak.

SEMICHORUS.

Druid, theſe, in order meet,
Are all prepar'd.

SEMICHORUS.

But tell me yet,
Cadwall! did thy ſtep profound
Dive into the cavern deep,
Twice twelve fathom under ground,
Where our ſage fore-fathers ſleep?
Thence with reverence haſt thou born,
From the conſecrated cheſt,
The golden ſickle, ſcrip, and veſt,
Whilom by old Belinus worn?

SEMICHORUS.

Druid, theſe, in order meet,
Are all prepar'd.

SEMICHORUS.

But tell me yet,
From the grot of charms and ſpells,
Where our matron ſiſter dwells,
Brennus! has thy holy hand
Safely brought the druid wand?
And the potent adder-ſtone,
Gender'd 'fore th' autumnal moon?
When, in undulating twine,

The foaming ſnakes prolific join;
When they hiſs, and when they bear
Their wond'rous egg aloof in air;
Thence, before to earth it fall,
The Druid, in his hallow'd pall,
Receives the prize;
And inſtant flys,
Follow'd by th' envenom'd brood,
'Till he croſs the cryſtal flood.

SEMICHORUS.

Druid, theſe, in order meet,
Are all prepar'd.

SEMICHORUS.

Then all's compleat.
And now let nine of the ſelected band,
Whoſe greener years befit ſuch ſtation beſt,
With wary circuit pace around the grove:
And guard each inlet; watchful, leſt the eye
Of buſy curioſity profane
Pry on our rites: which now muſt be as cloſe
As done i'th' very central womb of earth.
Occaſion claims it; for Caractacus
This night demands admiſſion to our train.
He, once our king, while ought his power avail'd
To ſave his country from the rod of tyrants;
That duty paſt, does wiſely now retire
To end his days in ſecrecy and peace;
Druid with Druids, in this chief of groves,
Ev'n in the heart of Mona. See, he comes!
How awful is his port! mark him, my friends!

He looks, as doth the tower, whoſe nodding walls,
After the conflict of heav'n's angry bolts,
Frown with a dignity unmark'd before,
Ev'n in it's prime of ſtrength. Health to the king!

CARACTACUS, EVELINA, CHORUS.

This holy place, methinks, doth this night wear
More than it's wonted gloom: Druid, theſe groves
Have caught the diſmal colouring of my ſoul,
Changing their dark dun garbs to very ſable,
In pity to their gueſt. Hail, hallow'd oaks!
Hail, Britiſh born! who, laſt of Britiſh race,
Hold your primæval rights by nature's charter;
Not at the nod of Cæſar. Happy foreſters,
Ye wave your bold heads 'mid the liberal air;
Nor aſk, for priviledge, a prætor's edict.
Ye, with your tough and intertwiſted roots,
Graſp the firm rocks ye ſprung from; and, erect
In knotty hardihood, ſtill proudly ſpread
Your leafy banners 'gainſt the tyrannous north,
Who Roman like aſſails you. Tell me, Druid,
Is it not better to be ſuch as theſe,
Than be the thing I am?

CHORUS.

To be the thing,
Eternal wiſdom wills, is ever beſt.

CARACTACUS.

But I am loſt to that predeſtin'd uſe
Eternal wiſdom will'd, and fitly therefore

May wiſh a change of being. I was born,
A king; and Heav'n, who bade theſe warrior oaks
Lift their green ſhields againſt the fiery ſun,
To fence their ſubject plain, did mean, that I
Should, with as firm an arm, protect my people,
Againſt the peſtilent glare of Rome's ambition.
I fail'd; and how I fail'd, thou know'ſt too well;
So does the babbling world: and therefore, Druid,
I would be any thing ſave what I am.

CHORUS.

See, to thy wiſh, the holy rites prepar'd,
Which, if heav'n frown not, conſecrate thee Druid:
See to the altar's baſe the victims led,
From whoſe free-guſhing blood ourſelf ſhall read
It's high beheſts; which if aſſenting found,
Theſe hands around thy choſen limbs ſhall wrap
The veſt of ſanctity; while at the act
Yon white-rob'd bards, ſweeping their ſolemn harps,
Shall lift their choral warblings to the ſkies,
And call the gods to witneſs. Mean-while, Prince,
Bethink thee well if ought on this vain earth
Still holds too firm an union with thy ſoul,
Eſtranging it from peace.

CARACTACUS.

I had a queen:
Bear with my weakneſs, Druid! this tough breaſt
Muſt heave a ſigh, for ſhe is unreveng'd.
And can I taſte true peace, ſhe unreveng'd?
So chaſte, ſo lov'd a queen? ah, Evelina!

Hang not thus weeping on the feeble arm
That cou'd not ſave thy mother.

EVELINA.

To hang thus
Softens the pang of grief; and the ſweet thought,
That a fond father ſtill ſupports his child,
Sheds, on my penſive mind, ſuch ſoothing balm,
As doth the bleſſing of theſe pious ſeers,
When moſt they wiſh our welfare. Would to heav'n
A daughter's preſence could as much avail,
To eaſe her father's woes, as his doth mine.

CARACTACUS.

Ever moſt gentle! come unto my boſom:
Dear pattern of the precious prize I loſt,
Loſt, ſo inglorious loſt; my friends, theſe eyes
Did ſee her torn from my defenceleſs camp;
Whilſt I, hemm'd round by ſquadrons, could not ſave her:
My boy, ſtill nearer to the darling pledge,
Beheld her ſhrieking in the ruffian's arm;
Beheld, and fled.

EVELINA.

Ah! Sir, forbear to wound
My brother's fame; he fled, but to recall
His ſcatter'd forces to purſue and ſave her.

CARACTACUS.

Daughter, he fled. Now, by yon gracious moon,
That riſing ſaw the deed, and inſtant hid
Her bluſhing face in twilight's duſky veil,
The flight was parricide.

EVELINA.

Indeed, indeed,
I know him valiant; and not doubt he fell
'Mid ſlaughter'd thouſands of the haughty foe,
Victim to filial love. Arviragus,
Thou hadſt no ſiſter near the bloody field,
Whoſe ſorrowing ſearch, led by yon orb of night,
Might find thy body; waſh with tears thy wounds;
And wipe them with her hair.

CHORUS.

Peace, virgin, peace:
Nor thou, ſad prince, reply; whate'er he is,
Be he a captive, fugitive, or corſe,
He is what heav'n ordain'd: theſe holy groves
Permit no exclamation 'gainſt heav'n's will
To violate their echoes: Patience, here,
Her meek hands folded on her modeſt breaſt,
In mute ſubmiſſion lifts th' adoring eye,
Ev'n to the ſtorm that wrecks her.

EVELINA.

Holy Druid,
If ought my erring tongue has ſaid pollutes
This ſacred place, I from my ſoul abjure it.
And will theſe lips bar with eternal ſilence,
Rather than ſpeak a word, or act a deed
Unmeet for thy ſage daughters; bleſſing firſt
This hallow'd hour, that takes me from the world,
And joins me to their ſober ſiſterhood.

CHORUS.

'Tis wiſely ſaid. See, prince, this prudent maid,
Now, while the ruddy flame of ſparkling youth
Glows on her beauteous cheek, can quit the world
Without a ſigh, whilſt thou——

CARACTACUS.

Would ſave my queen
From a baſe raviſher; would wiſh to plunge
This falchion in his breaſt, and ſo avenge
Inſulted royalty. O holy men!
Ye are the ſons of piety and peace;
Ye never felt the ſharp vindictive ſpur,
That goads the injur'd warrior; the hot tide,
That flushes crimſon on the conſcious cheek
Of him, who burns for glory; elſe indeed
Ye much would pity me: would curſe the fate
That coops me here inactive in your groves,
Robs me of hope, tells me this truſty ſteel
Muſt never cleave one Roman helm again
Never avenge my queen, nor free my country.

CHORUS.

'Tis heav'n's high will——

CARACTACUS.

I know it, reverend fathers!
'Tis heav'n's high will, that theſe poor aged eyes
Shall never more behold that virtuous woman,
To whom my youth was conſtant, 'twas heaven's will
To take her from me at that very hour,
When beſt her love might ſooth me; that black hour,
[May memory ever raze it from her records]

When all my ſquadrons fled, and left their king
Old and defenceleſs: him, who nine whole years
Had ſtemm'd all Rome with their firm phallanx: yes,
For nine whole years, my friends, I bravely led
The valiant veterans, oft to victory,
Never 'till then to ſhame. Bear with me, Druid,
I've done: begin the rites.

CHORUS.

O would to heav'n
A frame of mind, more fitted to theſe rites,
Poſſeſt thee, Prince! that Reſignation meek,
That dove-ey'd Peace, handmaid of Sanctity,
Approach'd this altar with thee: 'ſtead of theſe,
See I not gaunt Revenge, enſanguin'd Slaughter,
And mad Ambition, clinging to thy ſoul,
Eager to ſnatch thee back to their domain,
Back to a vain and miſerable world;
Whoſe miſery, and vanity, tho' try'd,
Thou ſtill hold'ſt dearer than theſe ſolemn ſhades,
Where Quiet reigns with Virtue? Try we yet
What Holineſs can do; for much it can:
Much is the potency of pious prayer:
And much the ſacred influence convey'd
By ſage myſterious office: when the ſoul,
Snatch'd by the power of muſick from her cell
Of fleſhly thraldom, feels herſelf upborn
On plumes of extaſy, and boldly ſprings,
'Mid ſwelling harmonies and pealing hymns,
Up to the porch of heav'n. Strike, then, ye Bards!
Strike all your ſtrings ſymphonious; wake a ſtrain

May penetrate, may purge, may purify,
His yet unhallow'd boſom; call ye hither
The airy tribe, that on yon mountain dwell,
Ev'n on majeſtic Snowdon: they, who never
Deign viſit mortal men, ſave on ſome cauſe
Of higheſt import, but, ſublimely ſhrin'd
On it's hoar top in domes of cryſtaline ice,
Hold converſe with thoſe ſpirits, that poſſeſs
The ſkies pure ſapphire, neareſt heav'n itſelf.

ODE.

I. 1.

MONA on Snowdon calls:
Hear, thou King of mountains, hear;
Hark, ſhe ſpeaks from all her ſtrings;
Hark, her loudeſt echo rings;
King of mountains, bend thine ear:
Send thy ſpirits, ſend them ſoon,
Now, when Midnight and the Moon
Meet upon thy front of ſnow:
See, their gold and ebon rod,
Where the ſober ſiſters nod,
And greet in whiſpers ſage and ſlow.
Snowdon mark! 'tis Magic's hour;
Now the mutter'd ſpell hath pow'r;
Pow'r to rend thy ribs of rock,
And burſt thy baſe with thunder's ſhock;
But to thee no ruder ſpell
Shall Mona uſe, than thoſe that dwell

In muſic's ſecret cells, and lie
Steep'd in the ſtream of harmony.

I. 2.

Snowdon has heard the ſtrain:
Hark, amid the wond'ring grove
Other harpings anſwer clear,
Other voices meet our ear,
Pinnions flutter, ſhadows move,
Buſy murmurs hum around,
Ruſtling veſtments bruſh the ground;
Round, and round, and round they go,
Thro' the twilight, thro' the ſhade,
Mount the oak's majeſtic head,
And gild the tufted miſſeltoe.
Ceaſe, ye glittering race of light,
Cloſe your wings, and check your flight:
Here, arrang'd in order due,
Spread your robes of ſaffron hue;
For lo, with more than mortal fire,
Mighty Mador ſmites the lyre:
Hark he ſweeps the maſter-ſtrings;
Liſten all——

CHORUS.

Break off; a ſullen ſmoak involves the altar;
The central oak doth ſhake; I hear the ſound
Of ſteps prophane: Caractacus, retire;
Bear off the victims; Mona is polluted.

SEMICHORUS.

Father, as we did watch the eaſtern ſide,
We ſpied and inſtant ſeiz'd two ſtranger youths,

Who, in the bottom of a ſhadowy dell,
Held earneſt converſe: Britons do they ſeem,
And of Brigantian race.

CHORUS.

Haſte, drag them hither.

VELLINUS, ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

O ſpare, ye ſage and venerable Druids!
Your countrymen and ſons.

CHORUS.

And are ye Britons?
Unheard of profanation! Rome herſelf,
Ev'n impious Rome, whom conqueſt makes more impious,
Would not have dar'd ſo raſhly. O! for words,
Big with the fierceſt force of execration,
To blaſt the deed, and doers.

ELIDURUS.

Spare the curſe,
Oh ſpare our youth!

CHORUS.

Is it not now the hour,
The holy hour, when to the cloudleſs height
Of yon ſtarr'd concave climbs the full-orb'd moon,
And to this nether world in ſolemn ſtillneſs
Gives ſign, that to the liſt'ning ear of Heav'n
Religion's voice ſhould plead; the very babe
Knows this, and, chance awak'd, his little hands
Lifts to the gods, and on his innocent couch
Calls down a bleſſing. Shall your manly years
Plead ignorance, and impiouſly preſume
To preſs, with vile unconſecrated feet,

On Mona's hallow'd plain? know, wretches, know,
At any hour ſuch boldneſs is a crime,
At this 'tis ſacrilege.

VELLINUS.

Were Mona's plain
More hallow'd ſtill, hallow'd as is Heav'n's ſelf,
The cauſe might plead our pardon.

ELIDURUS.

Mighty Druid!
True, we have raſhly dar'd, yet, forc'd by duty,
Our ſov'reign's mandate——

VELLINUS.

Elder by my birth,
Brother, I claim, in right of elderſhip,
To open our high embaſſy.

CHORUS.

Speak then;
But ſee thy words anſwer in honeſt weight
To this proud prelude. Youth! they muſt be weighty,
T' atone for ſuch a crime.

VELLINUS.

If then to give
New nerves to vanquiſh'd valour, if to do,
What, with the bleſſing of the Gods, may ſave
A bleeding country from oppreſſion's ſword,
Be weighty buſineſs, know, on our commiſſion,
And on it's hop'd ſucceſs, that weight depends.

CHORUS.

Declare it then at once, briefly and boldly.

VELLINUS.

Caractacus is here.

CHORUS.

Say'ſt thou, proud boy?
'Tis boldly ſaid, and, grant 'twere truly ſaid,
Think'ſt thou he were not here from fraud or force
As ſafe as 'midſt a camp of conquerors?
Here, youth, he would be guarded by the gods;
Their own high hoſtage; and each ſacred hair
Of his ſelected head, would in theſe caverns
Sleep with the unſunn'd ſilver of the mine,
As precious and as ſafe; record the time,
When Mona e'er betray'd the hapleſs wretch,
That made her groves his refuge.

VELLINUS.

Holy Druid!
Think not ſo harſhly of our enterprize.
Can force, alas! dwell in our unarm'd hands?
Can fraud in our young boſoms? No, dread ſeer,
Our buſineſs told, I truſt thou'lt ſoon diſclaim
The vain ſuſpicion; and thy holy ear
(Be brave Caractacus or here or abſent)
Shall inſtant learn it. From the north we come;
The ſons of her, whoſe heav'n-entruſted ſway
Bleſſes the bold Brigantes; men who firmly
Have three long moons withſtood thoſe Roman powers,
Which, led by fell Oſtorius, ſtill aſſail
Our frontiers: yet ſo oft' have our ſtout ſwords
Repell'd their hot aſſault, that now, like falcons,
They hang ſuſpended, loth to quit their prey,

Nor daring yet to ſeize it. Such the ſtate
Of us and Rome; 'mid which our prudent mother,
Revolving what might to her people's weal
Beſt ſink the dubious ſcale, gave us ſwift charge
To ſeek the great Caractacus, and call
His valour to her aid, to lead her bands,
To fight the cauſe of liberty and Britain,
And quell theſe ravagers.

Caractacus ſtarts from behind the altar.

CARACTACUS, VELLINUS, ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

And ye have found me;
Friends, ye have found me: lead me to your Queen,
And the laſt purple drop in theſe old veins
Shall fall for her and Britain.

CHORUS.

Raſh, raſh Prince!

VELLINUS.

Ye bleſt immortal pow'rs! is this the man,
The more than man, who for nine bloody years
Withſtood all Rome? He is; that war-like front,
Seam'd o'er with honeſt ſcars, proclaims he is:
Kneel, brother, kneel, while in his royal hand
We lodge the ſignet: this, in pledge of faith,
Great Cartiſmandua ſends, and with it tells thee
She has a nobler pledge than this behind;
Thy Queen——

CARACTACUS.

Guideria!

VELLINUS.

Safely with our mother.

CARACTACUS.

How, when, where reſcued? mighty Gods, I thank ye.
For it is true, this ſignet ſpeaks it true.
O tell me briefly.

VELLINUS.

In a ſally, Prince,
Which, wanting abler chiefs, my gracious mother
Committed to my charge, our troops aſſail'd
One outwork of the camp; the maſk of night
Favour'd our arms, and there my happy hand
Was doom'd 'mid other priſoners to releaſe
The captive matron.

CARACTACUS.

Let me claſp thee, youth,
And thou ſhalt be my ſon; I had one, ſtranger,
Juſt of thy years; he look'd like thee right honeſt;
Had juſt that freeborn boldneſs on his brow,
And yet he fail'd me. Were it not for him,
Who, as thou ſeeſt, ev'n at this hour of joy,
Draws tears down mine old cheek, I were as bleſt
As the great gods. Oh, he has all diſgrac'd
His high-born anceſtry! But I'll forget him.
Haſte, Evelina, barb my knotty ſpear,
Bind faſt this truſty falchion to my thigh,
My bow, my target——

CHORUS.

Raſh Caractacus!
What haſt thou done? What doſt thou mean to do?

CARACTACUS.

To ſave my country.

CHORUS.

To betray thyſelf.
That thou haſt done; the reſt thou canſt not do,
If Heav'n forbids; and of it's awful will
Thy fury recks not: Has the bleeding victim
Pour'd a propitious ſtream? the milk-white ſteeds
Unrein'd and neighing pranc'd with fav'ring ſteps?
Say, when theſe youths approach'd, did not a guſt
Of livid ſmoak involve the bickering flame?
Did not the foreſt tremble? every omen
Led thee to doubt their honeſty of purpoſe;
And yet, before their tongues could tell that purpoſe,
Ere I had tender'd, as our laws ordain,
Their teſt of faith, thy rudeneſs ruſh'd before me,
Infringing my juſt rights.

CARACTACUS.

Druid, methinks,
At ſuch a time, in ſuch a cauſe, Reproof
Might bait it's ſternneſs. Now, by Heav'n, I feel,
Beyond all omens, that within my breaſt,
Which marſhals me to conqueſt; ſomething here
That ſnatches me beyond all mortal fears,
Lifts me to where upon her jaſper throne
Sits flame-rob'd Victory, who calls me ſon,
And crowns me with a palm, whoſe deathleſs green
Shall bloom when Caeſar's fades.

CHORUS.

Vain confidence!

CARACTACUS.

Yet I ſubmit in all——

CHORUS.

'Tis meet thou ſhould'ſt.
Thou art a King, a ſov'reign o'er frail man;
I am a Druid, ſervant of the Gods;
Such ſervice is above ſuch ſov'reignty,
As well thou know'ſt: if they ſhould prompt theſe lips
To interdict the thing thou dar'ſt to do,
What would avail thy daring?

CARACTACUS.

Holy man!
But thou wilt bleſs it; Heav'n will bid thee bleſs it;
Thou know'ſt that, when we fight to ſave our country,
We fight the cauſe of Heav'n. The man that falls,
Falls hallow'd; falls a victim for the Gods;
For them and for their altars.

CHORUS.

Valiant Prince?
Think not we lightly rate our country's weal,
Or thee our country's champion. Well we know
The glorious meed of thoſe exalted ſouls,
Who flame like thee for freedom: mark me, Prince.
The time will come, when Deſtiny and Death,
Thron'd in a burning car, the thund'ring wheels
Arm'd with gigantic ſcythes of adamant,
Shall ſcour this field of life: and in their rear
The fiend Oblivion: kingdoms, empires, worlds
Melt in the general blaze: when, lo, from high
Andraſte darting, catches from the wreck

The roll of fame, claps her aſcending plumes,
And ſtamps on orient ſtars each patriot name,
Round her eternal dome.

CARACTACUS.

Speak ever thus,
And I will hear thee, 'till attention faint
In heedleſs extaſy.

CHORUS.

This tho' we know,
Let man beware with headlong zeal to ruſh
Where ſlaughter calls; it is not courage, Prince,
No nor the pride and practis'd ſkill in arms,
That gains this meed: the warrior is no patriot,
Save when, obſequious to the will of Heav'n,
He draws the ſword of vengeance.

CARACTACUS.

Surely, Druid,
Such fair occaſion ſpeaks the will of Heav'n——

CHORUS.

Monarch, perchance thou haſt a fair occaſion:
But, if thou haſt, the Gods will ſoon declare it:
Their ſov'reign will thou know'ſt not; this to learn
Demands our ſearch. Ye mortals all retire!
Leave ye the grove to us and Inſpiration;
Nor let a ſtep, or ev'n one glance prophane,
Steal from your caverns: ſtay, my holy brethren,
Ye time-ennobled Seers, whoſe rev'rend brows
Full eighty winters whiten; you, ye Bards,
Leoline, Cadwall, Hoel, Cantaber,
Attend upon our ſlumbers: Wondrous men,

Ye, whoſe ſkill'd fingers know how beſt to lead,
Thro' all the maze of ſound the wayward ſtep
Of Harmony, recalling oft, and oft
Permitting her unbridled courſe to ruſh
Thro' diſſonance to concord, ſweeteſt then
Ev'n when expected harſheſt. Mador, thou
Alone ſhalt lift thy voice; no choral peal
Shall drown thy ſolemn warblings; thou beſt know'ſt
That opiate charm which lulls corporeal ſenſe:
Thou haſt the key, great Bard! that beſt can ope
The portal of the ſoul; unlock it ſtrait,
And lead the penſive pilgrim on her way,
Thro' the vaſt regions of futurity.

Exeunt Caractacus, Vellinus,
&c. &c.

ODE.

I. 1.

HAIL, thou harp of Phrygian frame!
In years of yore that Camber bore
From Troy's ſepulchral flame;
With ancient Brute, to Britain's ſhore
The mighty minſtrel came:
Sublime upon the burniſh'd prow,
He bad thy manly modes to flow;
Britain heard the deſcant bold,
She flung her white arms o'er the ſea;
Proud in her leafy boſom to enfold
The freight of harmony.

I. 2.

Mute 'till then was ev'ry plain,
Save where the flood 'mid mountains rude
Tumbled his tide amain;
And echo from th' impending wood
Reſounded the hoarſe ſtrain;
While from the north the ſullen gale
With hollow whiſtlings ſhook the vale;
Diſmal notes, and anſwer'd ſoon
By ſavage howl the heaths among,
What time the wolf doth bay the trembling moon,
And thin the bleating throng.

I. 3.

Thou ſpak'ſt, imperial Lyre,
The rough roar ceas'd, and airs from high
Lapt the land in extaſy:
Fancy, the fairy, with thee came;
And Inſpiration, bright-ey'd dame,
Oft at thy call would leave her ſapphire ſky;
And, if not vain the verſe preſumes,
Ev'n now ſome chaſt Divinity is near:
For lo! the ſound of diſtant plumes
Pants thro' the pathleſs deſart of the air.
'Tis not the flight of her;
'Tis ſleep, her dewy harbinger,
Change, my harp, O change thy meaſures;
Cull, from thy mellifluous treaſures,
Notes that ſteal on even feet,
Ever flow, yet never pauſing,
Mixt with many a warble ſweet,
In a ling'ring cadence cloſing,

While the pleas'd power ſinks gently down the ſkies,
And ſeals with hand of down the Druids ſlumb'ring eyes.

II. 1.

Thrice I pauſe, and thrice I ſound
The central ſtring, and now I ring
(By meaſur'd lore profound)
A ſevenfold chime, and ſweep, and ſwing
Above, below, around,
To mix thy muſic with the ſpheres,
That warble to immortal ears.
Inſpiration hears the call;
She riſes from her throne above,
And, ſudden as the glancing meteors fall,
She comes, ſhe fills the grove.

II. 2.

High her port; her waving hand
A pencil bears; the days, the years,
Ariſe at her command,
And each obedient colouring wears.
Lo, where Time's pictur'd band
In hues æthereal glide along;
O mark the tranſitory throng;
Now they dazzle, now they die,
Inſtant they flit from light to ſhade,
Mark the blue forms of faint futurity,
O mark them ere they fade.

II. 3.

Whence was that inward groan?
Why burſts thro' cloſed lids the tear?
Why uplifts the briſtling hair

It's white and venerable ſhade?
Why down the conſecrated head
Courſes in chilly drops the dew of fear?
All is not well, the pale-ey'd moon
Curtains her head in clouds, the ſtars retire,
Save from the ſultry ſouth alone
The ſwart ſtar flings his peſtilential fire;
Ev'n Sleep herſelf will fly,
If not recall'd by harmony.
Wake, my lyre! thy ſofteſt numbers,
Such as nurſe ecſtatic ſlumbers,
Sweet as tranquil virtue feels
When the toil of life is ending,
While from earth the ſpirit ſteals,
And, on new-born plumes aſcending,
Haſtens to lave in the bright fount of day,
'Till Deſtiny prepare a ſhrine of purer clay.

The Druid waking, ſpeaks.

CHORUS.

It may not be. Avaunt terrific ax!
Why hangs thy bright edge glaring o'er the grove?
O for a giant's nerve to ward the ſtroke!
It bows, it falls.
Where am I? huſh, my ſoul!
'Twas all a dream. Reſume no more the ſtrain:
The hour is paſt: my brethren! what ye ſaw,
(If what ye ſaw, as by your looks I read,
Bore like ill-omen'd ſhape) hold it in ſilence.
The midnight air falls chilly on my breaſt;

And now I ſhiver, now a fev'riſh glow
Scorches my vitals. Hark, ſome ſtep approaches.

EVELINA, CHORUS.

Thus, with my wayward fears, to burſt unbidden
On your dread ſynod, rouſing, as ye ſeem,
From holy trance, appears a deſperate deed,
Ev'n to the wretch who dares it.

CHORUS.

Virgin! quickly
Pronounce the cauſe.

EVELINA.

Bear with a ſimple maid
Too prone to fear, perchance my fears are vain.

CHORUS.

But yet declare them.

EVELINA.

I ſuſpect me much
The faith of theſe Brigantes.

CHORUS.

Say'ſt thou, Virgin?
Heed what thou ſay'ſt; Suſpicion is a gueſt
That in the breaſt of man, of ireful man,
Too oft' his welcome finds; yet ſeldom ſure
In that ſubmiſſive calm that ſmooths the mind
Of maiden innocence.

EVELINA.

I know it well:
Yet muſt I ſtill diſtruſt the elder ſtranger:
For while he talks, (and much the flatterer talks)

His brother's ſilent carriage gives diſproof
Of all his boaſt; indeed I mark'd it well;
And, as my father with the elder held
Bold ſpeech and warlike, as is ſtill his wont
When fir'd with hope of conqueſt, oft I ſaw
A ſigh unbidden heave the younger's breaſt,
Half check'd as it was rais'd; ſometimes, methought,
His gentle eye would caſt a glance on me,
As if he pitied me; and then again
Would faſten on my father, gazing there
To veneration; then he'd ſigh again,
Look on the ground, and hang his modeſt head
Moſt penſively.

CHORUS.

This may demand, my breth'ren,
More ſerious ſearch: Virgin! proceed.

EVELINA.

'Tis true,
My father, rapt in high heroic zeal,
His ev'ry thought big with his country's freedom,
Heeds not the different carriage of theſe brethren,
The elder takes him wholly; yet, methinks,
The younger's manners have I know not what,
That ſpeaks him far more artleſs. This beſides,
Is it not ſtrange, if, as the tale reports,
My mother ſojourns with this diſtant queen,
She ſhould not ſend or to my ſire, or me,
Some fond remembrance of her love? ah! none,
With tears I ſpeak it, none, not her dear bleſſing
Has reach'd my longing ears.

CHORUS.

The gods, my brethren,
Have wak'd theſe doubts in the untainted breaſt
Of this mild maiden; oft to female ſoftneſs,
Oft to the purity of virgin ſouls
Doth heav'n it's voluntary light diſpenſe,
When victims bleed in vain. They muſt be ſpies.
Hie thee, good Cantaber, and to our preſence
Summon the young Brigantian.

EVELINA.

Do not that,
Or, if ye do, yet treat him nothing ſternly:
The ſofteſt terms from ſuch a tender breaſt
Will draw confeſſion, and, if ye ſhall find
The treaſon ye ſuſpect, forbear to curſe him.
(Not that my weakneſs means to guide your wiſdom)
Yet, as I think he would not wittingly
E'er do a deed of baſeneſs, were it granted
That I might queſtion him, my heart forbodes
It more could gain by gentleneſs and prayers,
Than will the fierceſt threats.

CHORUS.

Perchance it may:
And quickly ſhalt thou try. But ſee the King!
And with him both the youths.

EVELINA.

Alas! my fears
Forewent my errand, elſe had I inform'd thee
That therefore did I come, and from my father
To gain admiſſion. Mark the younger, Druid,

How ſad he ſeems; oft did he in the cave
So fold his arms——

CHORUS.

We mark him much, and much
The elder's free and dreadleſs confidence.
Virgin, retire a while in yonder vale,
Nor, 'till thy royal father quits the grove,
Reſume thy ſtation here. *Exit Evelina.*

CARACTACUS, CHORUS, VELLINUS, ELIDURUS.

Forgive me, Druid!
My eager ſoul no longer could ſuſtain
The pangs of expectation; hence I ſent
The virgin innocence of Evelina,
Safeſt to break upon your privacy:
She not return'd, O pardon! that uncall'd
I follow: the great cauſe, I truſt, abſolves me:
'Tis your's, 'tis freedom's, 'tis the cauſe of heav'n;
And ſure heav'n owns it ſuch.

CHORUS.

Caractacus,
All that by ſage and ſanctimonious rites
Might of the gods be aſk'd, we have eſſay'd,
And yet, nor to our wiſh, nor to their wont,
Gave they benign aſſent.

CARACTACUS.

Death to our hopes!

CHORUS.

While yet we lay in ſacred ſlumber tranc'd,

Sullen and ſad to fancy's frighted eye
Did ſhapes of dun and murky hue advance,
In train tumultuous, all of geſture ſtrange,
And paſſing horrible; ſtarting we wak'd,
Yet felt no waking calm; ſtill all was dark,
Still rang our tinkling ears with ſcreams of woe,
Suſpicious tremors ſtill——

VELLINUS.

Of what ſuſpicious?
Druid, our Queen——

CHORUS.

Reſtrain thy way-ward tongue,
Inſolent youth! in ſuch licentious mood
To interrupt our ſpeech ill ſuits thy years,
And worſe our ſanctity.

CARACTACUS.

'Tis his diſtreſs
Makes him forget, what elſe his reverent zeal
Would pay ye holily. Think what he feels,
Poor youth! who fears yon moon, before ſhe wanes,
May ſee his country conquer'd; ſee his mother
The victor's ſlave, her royal blood debas'd,
Dragging her chains thro' the throng'd ſtreets of Rome,
To grace oppreſſion's triumph. Horrid thought!
Say, can it be that he, whoſe ſtrenuous youth
Adds vigor to his virtue, e'er can bear
This patiently? he comes to aſk my aid,
And, that witheld, (as now he needs muſt fear)
What means, alas! are left? ſearch Britain round,
What chief dares cope with Rome? what king but holds

His loan of power at a Proconſul's will,
At beſt a ſcepter'd ſlave?

VELLINUS.

Yes, Monarch, yes,
If Heav'n reſtrains thy formidable ſword,
Or to it's ſtroke denies that juſt ſucceſs
Which Heav'n alone can give, I fear me much
Our Queen, ourſelves, nay Britain's ſelf, muſt periſh.

CARACTACUS.

But is not this a fear makes Virtue vain?
Tears from yon miniſtring regents of the ſky
Their right? Plucks from firm-handed Providence,
The golden reins of ſublunary ſway,
And gives them to blind Chance? If this be ſo,
If Tyranny muſt lord it o'er the earth,
There's Anarchy in Heav'n. Nay, frown not, Druid,
I do not think 'tis thus.

CHORUS.

We truſt thou doſt not.

CARACTACUS.

Maſters of Wiſdom! No: my ſoul confides
In that all-healing and all-forming Power,
Who, on the radiant day when Time was born,
Caſt his broad eye upon the wild of ocean,
And calm'd it with a glance: then, plunging deep
His mighty arm, pluck'd from it's dark domain
This throne of Freedom, lifted it to light,
Girt it with ſilver cliffs, and call'd it Britain;
He did, and will preſerve it.

CHORUS.

Pious Prince,
In that all-healing and all-forming power
Still let thy ſoul confide; but not in men,
No, not in theſe, ingenuous as they ſeem,
'Till they are try'd by that high teſt of faith
Our ancient laws ordain.

VELLINUS.

Illuſtrious Seer,
Methinks our Sov'reign's ſignet well might plead
Her envoy's faith. Thy pardon, mighty Druid,
Not for ourſelves, but for our Queen we plead;
Miſtruſting us, ye wound her honour.

CHORUS.

Peace;
Our will admits no parly. Thither, Youths,
Turn your aſtoniſh'd eyes; behold yon huge
And unhewn ſphere of living adamant,
Which, pois'd by magic, reſts it's central weight
On yonder pointed rock: firm as it ſeems,
Such is it's ſtrange and virtuous property,
It moves obſequious to the gentleſt touch
Of him, whoſe breaſt is pure; but to a traytor,
Tho' ev'n a giant's proweſs nerv'd his arm,
It ſtands as fixt as Snowdon. No reply;
The Gods command that one of you muſt now
Approach and try it: in your ſnowy veſts,
Ye Prieſts, involve the lots, and to the younger,
As is our wont, tender the choice of Fate.

ELIDURUS.

Heav'ns! is it fall'n on me?

CHORUS.

Young Prince, it is;
Prepare thee for thy tryal.

ELIDURUS.

Gracious Gods!
Who may look up to your tremendous thrones,
And ſay his breaſt is pure? All-ſearching Powers,
Ye know already how and what I am;
And what ye mean to publiſh me in Mona,
To that I yield and tremble.

CARACTACUS.

Rouſe thee, Youth!
And, with that courage honeſt Truth ſupplies,
(For ſure ye both are true) haſte to the tryal;
Behold I lead thee on.

CHORUS.

Prince, we arreſt
Thy haſty ſtep; to witneſs this high teſt
Pertains to us alone. Awhile retire,
And in yon cave his brother be thy charge;
The tryal paſt, again will we confer,
Touching that part which Heav'n's deciding choice
Wills thee to act.

Exeunt Caractacus and Vellinus.

CHORUS, ELIDURUS.

Now be the rites prepar'd:
And now, ye Bards, chaunt ye that cuſtom'd hymn,
The prelude of this fam'd ſolemnity.

ODE.

I. 1.

THOU Spirit pure, that ſpread'ſt unſeen
Thy pinions o'er this pond'rous ſphere,
And, breathing thro' each rigid vein,
Fill'ſt with ſtupendous life the marble maſs,
And bid'ſt it bow upon it's baſe,
When ſov'reign Truth is near;
Spirit inviſible! to thee
We ſwell the ſolemn harmony;
Hear us, and aid:
Thou, that in Virtue's cauſe
O'er-ruleſt Nature's laws,
O hear, and aid with influence high
The ſons of Peace and Piety.

I. 2.

Firſt-born of that æthereal tribe
Call'd into birth ere time or place,
Whom wave nor wind can circumſcribe,
Heirs of the liquid liberty of Light,
That float on rainbow pennons bright
Thro' all the wilds of ſpace,
Yet thou alone of all thy kind
Canſt range the regions of the mind,

Thou only know'ſt
That dark meandring maze,
Where wayward Falſhood ſtrays,
And, ſeizing ſwift the lurking ſprite,
Forces her forth to ſhame and light.

1. 3.

Thou canſt enter the dark cell
Where the vulture Conſcience ſlumbers,
And, unarm'd by charming ſpell,
Or magic numbers,
Canſt rouſe her from her formidable ſleep,
And bid her dart her raging talons deep;
Yet, ah! too ſeldom doth the furious fiend
Thy bidding wait; vindictive, ſelf-prepar'd,
She knows her tort'ring time; too ſure to rend
The trembling heart, when Virtue quits her guard.
Pauſe then, celeſtial gueſt!
And, brooding on thine adamantine ſphere,
If fraud approach, Spirit, that fraud declare;
To Conſcience and to Mona leave the reſt.

CHORUS.

Heard'ſt thou the awful invocation, Youth,
Wrapt in thoſe holy harpings?

ELIDURUS.

Sage, I did;
And it came o'er my ſoul as doth the thunder,
While diſtant yet, it, with expected burſt
Threatens the trembling ear. Now to the tryal,

CHORUS.

Ere that, bethink thee well what rig'rous doom
Threatens thine act, if failing, certain death:
So certain, that in our abſolving tongues
Reſts not that power may ſave thee: Thou muſt die.

EVELINA, ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

Die, ſay'ſt thou? Druid!

ELIDURUS.

Evelina here!
Lead to the rock.

CHORUS.

No, youth, a while we ſpare thee;
And, in our ſtead, permit this royal maiden
To urge thee firſt with virgin gentleneſs;
Reſpect our clemency, and meet her queſtions
With anſwers prompt and true; ſo may'ſt thou 'ſcape
A ſterner tryal.

ELIDURUS.

Rather to the rock—

EVELINA.

Doſt thou diſdain me, Prince? Loſt as I am,
Methinks the daughter of Caractacus
Might merit milder treatment: I was born
To royal hopes and promiſe, nurs'd i'th' lap
Of ſoft proſperity, alas the change!
I meant but to adreſs a few brief words
To this young Prince, and he doth turn his eye,
And ſcorns to anſwer me.

ELIDURUS.

Scorn thee, ſweet Maid?
No, 'tis the fear——

EVELINA.

And canſt thou fear me, Youth?
Ev'n while I led a life of royalty,
I bore myſelf to all with meek deportment,
In nothing harſh, or cruel: and, howe'er
Misfortune works upon the minds of men,
(For ſome they ſay it turns to very ſtone)
Mine I am ſure it ſoftens. Wert thou guilty,
Yet I ſhould pity thee; nay, wert thou leagu'd
To load this ſuffering heart with more misfortunes,
Still ſhould I pity thee; nor e'er believe
Thou would'ſt, on free and voluntary choice,
Betray the innocent.

ELIDURUS.

Indeed I would not,

EVELINA.

No, gracious Youth, I do believe thou would'ſt not:
For on thy brow the liberal hand of Heav'n
Has portray'd Truth as viſible and bold,
As were the pictur'd ſuns that deckt the brows
Of our brave anceſtors. Say then, young Prince,
(For therefore have I wiſh'd to queſtion thee)
Bring ye no token of a mother's fondneſs
To her expecting child? Gentle thou ſeemeſt,
And ſure that gentleneſs would prompt thine heart
To viſit, and to ſooth with courteous office,
Diſtreſs like her's. A captive and a queen

Has more than common claim for pity, Prince,
And, ev'n the ills of venerable age
Were cauſe enough to move thy tender nature.
The tears o'er-charge thine eye. Alas, my fears!
Sickneſs or ſore infirmity had ſeiz'd her,
Before thou left'ſt the palace, elſe her lips
Had to thy care intruſted ſome kind meſſage,
And bleſt her hapleſs daughter by thy tongue.
Would ſhe were here!

ELIDURUS.

Would Heav'n ſhe were!

EVELINA.

Ah why?

ELIDURUS.

Becauſe you wiſh it.

EVELINA.

Thanks, ingenuous youth,
For this thy courteſy. Yet, if the queen
Thy mother ſhines with ſuch rare qualities,
As late thy brother boaſted, ſhe will calm
Her woes, and I ſhall claſp her aged knees
Again, in peace and liberty.——Alas!
He ſpeaks not; all my fears are juſt.

ELIDURUS.

What fears?
The Queen Guideria is not dead.

EVELINA.

Not dead!
But is ſhe in that ſacred ſtate of freedom,
Which we were taught to hope? Why ſigh'ſt thou,
Youth?

Thy years have yet been proſp'rous. Did thy father
E'er loſe his kingdom? Did captivity
E'er ſeize thy ſhrieking mother? thou can'ſt go
To yonder cave, and find thy brother ſafe:
He is not loſt, as mine is. Youth, thou ſigh'ſt
Again; thou haſt not ſure ſuch cauſe for ſorrow;
But if thou haſt, give me thy griefs, I pray thee;
I have a heart can ſoftly ſympathize,
And ſympathy is ſoothing.

ELIDURUS.

O gods! gods!
She tears my ſoul. What ſhall I ſay?

EVELINA.

Perchance,
For all in this bad world muſt have their woes,
Thou too haſt thine; and may'ſt, like me, be wretched.
Haply amid the ruinous waſte of war,
'Mid that wild havock, which theſe ſons of blood
Bring on our groaning country, ſome chaſte maid,
Whoſe tender ſoul was link'd by love to thine,
Might fall the trembling prey to Roman rage,
Ev'n at the golden hour, when holy rites
Had ſeal'd your virtuous vows. If it were ſo,
Indeed I pity her!

ELIDURUS.

Not that: not that.
Never 'till now did beauty's matchleſs beam——
But I am dumb.

EVELINA.

Why that dejected eye?

And why this ſilence? that ſome weighty grief
O'erhangs thy ſoul, thy ev'ry look proclaims.
Why then refuſe it words? The heart, that bleeds
From any ſtroak of fate or human wrongs,
Loves to diſcloſe itſelf, that liſt'ning pity
May drop a healing tear upon the wound.
'Tis only, when with inbred horror ſmote
At ſome baſe act, or done, or to be done,
That the recoiling ſoul, with conſcious dread,
Shrinks back into itſelf. But thou, good youth—

ELIDURUS.

Ceaſe, royal maid! permit, me to depart.—

EVELINA.

Yet hear me, ſtranger! Truth and Secrecy,
Tho' friends, are ſeldom neceſſary friends—

ELIDURUS.

I go to try my truth—

EVELINA.

O! go not hence,
In wrath; think not, that I ſuſpect thy virtue:
Yet ignorance may oft make virtue ſlide,
And if——

ELIDURUS.

In pity ſpare me.

EVELINA.

If thy brother—
Nay, ſtart not, do not turn thine eye from mine;
Speak, I conjure thee, is his purpoſe honeſt?
I know the guilty price, that barbarous Rome
Sets on my father's head; and gold, vile gold,

Has now a charm for Britons: Brib'd by this,
Should he betray him—Yes, I ſee thou ſhudder'ſt
At the dire thought; yet not, as if 'twere ſtrange;
But as our fears were mutual. Ah, young ſtranger;
That open face ſcarce needs a tongue to utter
What works within. Come then, ingenuous Prince,
And inſtant make diſcovery to the Druid,
While yet 'tis not too late.

ELIDURUS.

Ah! what diſcover?
Say, whom muſt I betray?

EVELINA.

Thy brother.

ELIDURUS.

Ha!

EVELINA.

Who is no brother, if his guilty ſoul
Teems with ſuch perfidy. O all ye ſtars!
Can he be brother to a youth like thee,
Who would betray an old and honour'd King,
That King his countryman, and one whoſe proweſs
Once guarded Britain 'gainſt th' aſſailing world?
Can he be brother to a youth like thee,
Who from a young, defenceleſs, innocent maid,
Would take that King her father? Make her ſuffer
All that an orphan ſuffers? More perchance:
The ruffian foe.—O tears, ye choak my utterance!
Can he be brother to a youth like thee,
Who would defile his ſoul by ſuch black deeds?
It cannot be—And yet, thou ſtill art ſilent.

Turn, youth, and ſee me weep. Ah, ſee me kneel:
I am of royal blood, not wont to kneel;
Yet will I kneel to thee. O ſave my father!
Save a diſtreſsful maiden from the force
Of barbarous men! Be thou a brother to me,
For mine alas! hah! [*Sees Arviragus entring.*

ARVIRAGUS, EVELINA, ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

Evelina riſe!
Know, maid, I ne'er will tamely ſee thee kneel,
Ev'n at the foot of Cæſar.

EVELINA.

'Tis himſelf:
And he will prove my father's fears were falſe,
Falſe, as his ſon is brave. Thou beſt of brothers.
Come to my arms. Where haſt thou been, thou wanderer?
How wer't thou ſav'd? indeed, Arviragus,
I never ſhed ſuch tears, ſince thou wer't loſt,
For theſe are tears of rapture.

ARVIRAGUS.

Evelina!
Fain would I greet thee, as a brother ought:
But wherefore did'ſt thou kneel?

EVELINA.

O! aſk not now.

ARVIRAGUS.

By heav'n I muſt, and he muſt anſwer me,
Who'er he be. What art thou, ſullen ſtranger?

ELIDURUS.

A Britoh,

ARVIRAGUS.

Brief and bold.

EVELINA.

Ah, ſpare the taunt:
He merits not thy wrath. Behold the Druids;
Lo, they advance: with holy reverence firſt
Thou muſt addreſs their ſanctity.

ARVIRGAUS.

I will.
But ſee, proud boy, thou doſt not quit the grove,
Till time allows us parley.

ELIDURUS.

Prince, I mean not.

ARVIRAGUS.

Sages, and ſons of heav'n! Illuſtrious Druids!
Abruptly I approach your ſacred preſence:
Yet ſuch dire tidings———

CHORUS.

On thy peril, peace!
Thou ſtandſt accus'd, and by a father's voice,
Of crimes abhorr'd, of cowardice and flight;
And therefore mayſt not in theſe ſacred groves
Utter polluted accents. Quickly ſay,
Wherefore thou fledſt? For that baſe fact unclear'd
We hold no further converſe.

ARVIRAGUS.

O ye gods!
Am I the ſon of your Caractacus?
And could I fly?

CHORUS.

Waſte not or time or words:
But tell us, why thou fledſt?

ARVIRAGUS.

I fled not, Druid!
By the great gods I fled not! Save to ſtop
Our daſtard troops, that baſely turn'd their backs.
I ſtopt, I rallied them, when lo a ſhaft
Of random caſt did level me with earth,
Where pale and ſenſeleſs, as the ſlain around me,
I lay till midnight: Then, as from long trance
Awoke, I crawl'd upon my feeble limbs
To a lone cottage, where a pitying hind
Lodg'd me and nouriſh'd me. My ſtrength repair'd,
It boots not that I tell, what humble arts
Compell'd I us'd to ſcreen me from the foe.
How now a peaſant from a beggarly ſcrip
I ſold cheap food to ſlaves, that nam'd the price,
Nor after gave it. Now a minſtrel poor
With ill-tun'd harp and uncouth deſcant ſhrill
I ply'd a thriftleſs trade, and by ſuch ſhifts
Did win obſcurity to ſhroud my name.
At length to other conqueſts in the north
Oſtorius led his legions: Safer now,
Yet not ſecure, I to ſome valiant chiefs,
Whom war had ſpar'd, diſcover'd, what I was;
And with them plan'd, how ſureſt we might draw
Our ſcatter'd forces to ſome rocky faſtneſs
In rough Caernarvon, there to breathe in freedom,
If not with brave incurſion to oppreſs
The thinly-ſtation'd foe. And ſoon our art

So well avail'd, that now at Snowdon's foot
Full twenty troops of hardy veterans wait
To call my ſire their leader.

CHORUS.

Valiant youth———

EVELINA.

He is—I ſaid he was a valiant youth,
Nor has he ſham'd his race.

CHORUS.

We do believe
Thy modeſt tale: And may the righteous gods
Thus ever ſhed upon thy noble breaſt
Diſcretion's cooling dew. When nurtur'd ſo,
Then, only then, doth valour bloom mature.

ARVIRAGUS.

Yet vain is valour howſoe'er it bloom:
Druid, the gods frown on us. All my hopes
Are blaſted; I ſhall ne'er rejoin my friends,
Ne'er bleſs them with my father. Holy men,
I have a tale to tell, will ſhake your ſouls.
Your Mona is invaded; Rome approaches,
E'en to theſe groves approaches.

SEMICHORUS.

Horror! horror!

ARVIRAGUS.

Late, as I landed on yon higheſt beach,
Where nodding from the rocks the poplars fling
Their ſcatter'd arms, and daſh them in the wave,
There were their veſſels moor'd, as if they ſought
Concealment 'mid the ſhade, and as I paſt

Up yon thick-planted ridge, I 'ſpy'd their helms
'Mid brakes and boughs trench'd in the heath below,
Where like a neſt of night-worms did they glitter,
Sprinkling the plain with brightneſs. On I ſped
With ſilent ſtep, yet oft did paſs ſo near,
'Twas next to prodigy, I 'ſcap'd unſeen.

CHORUS.

Their number, prince?

ARVIRAGUS.

Few, if mine haſty eye
Did find, and count them all.

CHORUS.

O brethren, brethren,
Treaſon and ſacrilege, worſe foes than Rome,
Have led Rome hither. Inſtant ſeize that wretch,
And bring him to our preſence.

CHORUS, ELIDURUS, ARVIRAGUS.

Say, thou falſe one!
What doom befits the ſlave, who ſells his country?

ELIDURUS.

Death, ſudden death!

CHORUS.

No, ling'ring piece-meal death;
And to ſuch death thy brother and thyſelf
We now devote. Villain, thy deeds are known;
'Tis known, ye led the impious Romans hither
To ſlaughter us ev'n on our holy altars.

ELIDURUS.

That on my ſoul doth lie ſome ſecret grief,
Theſe looks perforce will tell: It is not fear,
Druids, it is not fear, that ſhakes me thus;

The great gods know, it is not: Ye can never:
For, what tho' wiſdom lifts ye next thoſe gods,
Ye cannot, like to them, unlock mens breaſts,
And read their inmoſt thoughts. Ah! that ye could.

ARVIRAGUS.

What haſt thou done?

ELIDURUS.

What, prince, I will not tell.

CHORUS.

Wretch, there are means———

ELIDURUS.

I know, and terrible means;
And 'tis both fit, that you ſhould try thoſe means,
And I endure them: Yet I think, my patience
Will for ſome ſpace baffle your torturing fury.

CHORUS.

Be that beſt known, when our inflicted goads
Harrow thy fleſh!

ARVIRAGUS.

Stranger, ere this is try'd
Confeſs the whole of thy black perfidy;
So black, that when I look upon thy youth,
Read thy mild eye, and mark thy modeſt brow,
I think indeed, thou durſt not.

ELIDURUS.

Such a crime
Indeed I durſt not; and would rather be
The very wretch, thou ſeeſt. I'll ſpeak no more.

CHORUS.

Brethren, 'tis ſo. The virgin's thoughts were juſt:
This youth has been deceived.

ELIDURUS.

Yes, one word more.
You ſay, the Romans have invaded Mona.
Give me a ſword and twenty honeſt Britons,
And I will quell thoſe Romans. Vain demand!
Alas! you cannot: Ye are men of peace:
Religion's ſelf forbids. Lead then to torture.

ARVIRAGUS.

Now on my ſoul this youth doth move me much.

CHORUS.

Think not, religion and our holy office
Doth teach us tamely, like the bleating lamb,
To crouch before oppreſſion, and with neck
Outſtretch'd await the ſtroke. Miſtaken boy!
Did not ſtrict juſtice claim thee for her victim,
We might full ſafely ſend thee to theſe Romans,
Inviting their hot charge. Know, when I blow
That ſacred trumpet bound with ſable fillets
To yonder branching oak, the awful ſound
Calls forth a thouſand Britons train'd alike
In holy and in martial exerciſe,
Not by ſuch mode and rule, as Romans uſe,
But of that fierce potentous horrible ſort,
As ſhall appall ev'n Romans.

ELIDURUS.

Gracious gods!
Then there are hopes indeed. O call them inſtant,
This prince will lead them on: I'll follow him,
Tho' in my chains, and ſome way daſh them round
To harm the haughty foe.

ARVIRAGUS.

A thouſand Britons,
And arm'd! O inſtant blow the ſacred trump,
And let me head them. Yet methinks this youth—

CHORUS.

I know, what thou wouldſt ſay, might join thee, prince.
True, were he free from crime, or had confeſt.

ELIDURUS.

Confeſt. Ah, think not, I will ere——

ARVIRAGUS.

Reflect.
Either thyſelf or brother muſt have wrong'd us:
Then why conceal——

ELIDURUS.

Haſt thou a brother? no!
Elſe hadſt thou ſpar'd the word; and yet a ſiſter
Lovely as thine might more than teach thee, prince,
What 'tis to have a brother. Hear me, Druids,
Tho' I would prize an hour of freedom now,
Before an age of any after date:
Tho' I would ſeize it, as the gift of heav'n,
And uſe it as heaven's gift: yet do not think,
I ſo will purchaſe it. Give it me freely,
I yet will ſpurn the boon, and hug my chains,
Till you do ſwear by your own hoary heads,
My brother ſhall be ſafe.

CHORUS.

Excellent youth!
Thy words do ſpeak thy ſoul, and ſuch a ſoul,
As wakes our wonder. Thou art free; thy brother

Shall be thine honour's pledge; ſo will we uſe him,
As thou art falſe, or true.

ELIDURUS.

I aſk no other.

ARVIRAGUS.

Thus then, my fellow ſoldier, to thy claſp
I give the hand of friendſhip. Noble youth,
We'll ſpeed, or die together.

CHORUS.

Hear us, prince!
Mona permits not, that he fight her battles,
Till duly purified: For, tho' his ſoul
Took up unwittingly this deed of baſeneſs,
Yet is luſtration meet. Learn, that in vice
There is a noiſome rankneſs unperceiv'd
By groſs corporeal ſenſe, which ſo offends
Heaven's pure divinities, as us the ſtench
Of vapour wafted from ſulphureous pool,
Or pois'nous weed obſcene. Hence doth the man,
Who ev'n converſes with a villain, need
As much purgation, as the pallid wretch
'Scap'd from the walls, where frowning peſtilence
Spreads wide her livid banners. For this cauſe,
Ye Prieſts, conduct the youth to yonder grove,
And do the needful rites.

[*Exeunt Prieſts with Elidurus.*

Mean while ourſelf
Will lead thee, prince, unto thy father's preſence.
—But hold, the king comes forth.

CARACTACUS, ARVIRAGUS, CHORUS, EVELINA.

My ſon! my ſon!
What joy, what tranſport, doth thine aged ſire
Feel in theſe filial foldings! Speak not, boy,
Nor interrupt, that heart-felt ecſtacy
Should ſtrike us mute. I know, what thou wouldſt ſay,
Yet prithee, peace. Thy ſiſter's voice hath clear'd thee,
And could excuſe find words at this bleſt moment,
Truſt me, I'd give it vent. But, 'tis enough,
Thy father welcomes thee to him and honour:
Honour, that now with rapt'rous certainty
Calls thee his own true offspring. Doſt thou weep?
Ah, if thy tears ſwell not from joy's free ſpring,
I beg thee, ſpare them: I have done thee wrong,
Can make thee no atonement: None, alas!
Thy father ſcarce can bleſs thee, as he ought;
Unbleſt himſelf, beſet with foes around,
Bereft of queen, of kingdom, and of ſoldiers,
He can but give thee portion of his dangers,
Perchance and of his chains: Yet droop not, boy,
Virtue is ſtill thine own.

ARVIRAGUS.

It is, my father;
Pure as from thine illuſtrious fount it came;
And that unſullied, let the world oppreſs us;
Let fraud and falſhood rivet fetters on us;
Still ſhall our ſouls be free; Yet hope is ours,
As well as virtue.

CARACTACUS.

Spoken like a Briton.
True, hope is ours, and therefore let's prepare:
The moments now are precious. Tell us, Druid,
Is it not meet, we ſee the bands drawn out,
And mark their due array?

CHORUS.

Monarch, ev'n now
They ſkirt the grove.

CARACTACUS.

Then let us to their front——

CHORUS.

But is the traitor-youth in ſafety lodg'd?

CARACTACUS.

Druid, he fled——

CHORUS.

O fatal flight to Mona!

CARACTACUS.

But what of that? Arviragus is here,
My ſon is here, then let the traitor go,
By this he has join'd the Romans: Let him join them,
A ſingle arm, and that a villain's arm,
Can lend but little aid to any powers
Oppos'd to truth and virtue. Come, my ſon,
Let's to the troops, and marſhal them with ſpeed.
That done, we from theſe venerable men
Will claim their ready bleſſing: Then to battle;
And the ſwift ſun ev'n at his purple dawn
Shall ſpy us crown'd with conqueſt, or with death.

[*Exeunt Caractacus and Arviragus.*

CHORUS, EVELINA.

What may his flight portend! Say, Evelina,
How came this youth to 'ſcape?

EVELINA.

And that to tell
Will fix much blame on my impatient folly:
For, ere your hallow'd lips had given permiſſion,
I flew with eager haſte to bear my father
News of his ſon's return. Enflam'd with that,
Think, how a ſiſter's zealous breaſt muſt glow!
Your looks give mild aſſent. I glow'd indeed
With the dear tale, and ſped me in his ear
To pour the precious tidings: But my tongue
Scarce nam'd Arviragus, ere the falſe ſtranger
(As I bethink me ſince) with ſtealthy pace
Fled to the cavern's mouth.

CHORUS.

The king purſued?

EVELINA.

Alas! he mark'd him not, for 'twas the moment,
When he had all to aſk and all to fear,
Touching my brother's valour. Hitherto
His ſafety only, which but little mov'd him,
Had reach'd his ears: But when my tongue unfolded
The ſtory of his bravery and his peril,
O how the tears cours'd plenteous down his cheeks!
How did he lift unto the heav'ns his hands
In ſpeechleſs tranſport! Yet he ſoon bethought him
Of Rome's invaſion, and with fiery glance

Survey'd the cavern round; then ſnatch'd his ſpear,
And menac'd to purſue the flying traitor:
But I with prayers (O pardon, if they err'd)
Withheld his ſtep, for to the left the youth
Had wing'd his way, where the thick underwood
Afforded ſure retreat. Beſides, if found,
Was age a match for youth?

CHORUS.

Maiden, enough.
Better perchance for us, if he was captive:
But in the juſtice of their cauſe, and heav'n,
Do Mona's ſons confide.

BARD, CHORUS, ELIDURUS, EVELINA.

Druid, the rites
Are finiſh'd, all ſave that which crowns the reſt,
And which pertains to thy bleſt hand alone:
For that he kneels before thee.

CHORUS.

Take him hence,
We may not truſt him forth to fight our cauſe.

ELIDURUS.

Now by Andraſte's throne——

CHORUS.

Nay, ſwear not, youth,
The tie is broke, that held thy fealty;
Thy brother's fled.

ELIDURUS.

Fled!

CHORUS.

To the Romans fled.
Yes, thou haſt cauſe to tremble.

ELIDURUS.

Ah, Vellinus!
Does thus our love, does thus our friendſhip end!
Was I thy brother, youth, and haſt thou left me!
Yes; and how left me, cruel, as thou art,
The victim of thy crimes!

CHORUS.

True, thou muſt die.

ELIDURUS.

I pray ye then on your beſt mercy, fathers,
It may be ſpeedy. I would fain be dead,
If this be life. Yet I muſt doubt ev'n that,
For falſhood of this ſtrange ſtupendous ſort
Sets firm-ey'd reaſon on a gaze, miſtruſting,
That what ſhe ſees in palpable plain form,
The ſtars in yon blue arch, theſe woods, theſe caverns,
Are all mere tricks of cozenage, nothing real,
The viſion of a viſion. If he's fled,
I ought to hate this brother.

CHORUS.

Yet thou doſt not.

ELIDURUS.

But when aſtoniſhment will give me leave,
Perchance I ſhall.—And yet he is my brother,
And he was virtuous once. Yes, ye vile Romans,
Yes, I muſt die, before my thirſty ſword

Drinks one rich drop of vengeance. Yet, ye robbers,
Yet will I curſe you with my dying lips:
'Twas you, that ſtole away my brother's virtue.

CHORUS.

Now then prepare to die.

ELIDURUS.

I am prepar'd.
Yet, ſince I cannot now (what moſt I wiſh'd)
By manly proweſs guard this lovely maid:
Permit, that on your holieſt earth I kneel,
And pour one fervent prayer for her protection.
Allow me this, for tho' you think me falſe,
The gods will hear me.

EVELINA.

I can hold no longer!
O Druid, Druid, at thy feet I fall:
Yes, I muſt plead (away with virgin-bluſhes)
For ſuch a youth muſt plead. I'll die to ſave him,
O take my life, and let him fight for Mona.

CHORUS.

Virgin, ariſe. His virtue hath redeem'd him,
And he ſhall fight for thee and for his country.
Youth, thank us with thy deeds. The time is ſhort,
And now with reverence take our high luſtration:
Thrice do we ſprinkle thee with day-break dew
Shook from the May-thorn bloſſom, twice and thrice
Touch we thy forehead with our holy wand:
Now thou art fully purg'd. Now riſe reſtor'd
To virtue and to us. Hence then, my ſon,

Hie thee to yonder altar, where our Bards
Shall arm thee duly both with helm and ſword
For warlike enterprize. [*Exit Elidarus.*

CARACTACUS, CHORUS, ARVIRAGUS, EVELINA.

'Tis true, my ſon,
Bold are their bearings, and I fear me not
But they have hearts will not belie their looks.
I like them well. Yet would to righteous heav'n
Thoſe valiant veterans, that on Snowdon guard
Their ſcanty pittance of bleak liberty,
Were here to join them: we would teach theſe wolves,
Tho' we permit their rage to prowl our coaſts,
That vengeance waits them ere they rob our altars.
Druid, all hail! we find thy valiant guards
Accoutred ſo, as well beſpeaks the wiſdom,
That fram'd their phalanx. We but wait thy bleſſing
To lead them 'gainſt the foe.

CHORUS.

Caractacus!
Behold this ſword: The ſword of old Belinus,
Stain'd with the blood of giants, and its name
TRIFINGUS. Many an age its charmed blade
Has ſlept within yon conſecrated trunk.
Lo, I unſheath it, king; I wave it o'er thee;
Mark, what portentous ſtreams of ſcarlet light
Flow from the brandiſh'd falchion. On thy knee
Receive the ſacred pledge.—And mark our words.
By the bright circle of the golden ſun,

By the brief courſes of the errant moon,
By the dread potency of every ſtar
In the myſterious zodiac's burning girth,
By each, and all of theſe ſupernal ſigns,
We do adjure thee with this truſty blade,
To guard yon central oak, whoſe holy ſtem
Involves the ſpirit of high Taranis:
This be thy charge; to which in aid we join
Ourſelves, and our ſage brethren. With our vaſſals
Thy ſon and the Brigantian prince ſhall make
Incurſion on the foe.

CARACTACUS.

In this, and all,
Your holy will be done. Yet ſurely, Druid,
The freſh and active vigour of theſe youths
Might better ſuit with this important charge.
Not that my heart ſhrinks at the glorious taſk,
But will with ready zeal pour forth its blood
Upon the ſacred roots, my firmeſt courage
Might fail to ſave. Think, fathers, I am old;
And if I fell the foremoſt in the onſet,
Should leave a ſon behind, might ſtill defend you.

CHORUS.

The ſacred adjuration we have utter'd
May never be recall'd.

CARACTACUS.

Then be it ſo.
Yet do not think, I counſel this thro' fear:
Old as I am, I truſt with half our powers
I could drive back theſe Romans to their ſhips;

Daſtards, that come as doth the cow'ring fowler
To tangle me with ſnares and take me tamely;
Slaves, they ſhall find, that ere they gain their prey,
They have to hunt it boldly with barb'd ſpears,
And meet ſuch conflict, as the chafed boar
Gives to his ſtout aſſailants. O ye gods!
That I might inſtant face them.

CHORUS.

Be thy ſon's
The onſet.

ARVIRAGUS.

From his ſoul that ſon doth thank ye,
Bleſſing the wiſdom, that preſerves his father
Thus to the laſt. O if the fav'ring gods
Direct this arm, if their high will permit,
I pour a proſperous vengeance on the foe,
I aſk for life no longer, than to crown
The valiant taſk. Steel then, ye powers of heav'n,
Steel my firm ſoul with your own fortitude,
Free from alloy of paſſion. Give me courage,
That knows not rage; revenge, that knows not malice;
Let me not thirſt for carnage, but for conqueſt:
And conqueſt gain'd, ſleep vengeance in my breaſt,
Ere in its ſheath my ſword.

CARACTACUS.

O hear his father!
If ever raſhneſs ſpur'd me on, great gods,
To acts of danger thirſting for renown;
If ere my eager ſoul purſued its courſe

Beyond juſt reaſon's limit, viſit not
My faults on him. I am the thing, you made me,
Vindictive, bold, precipitate, and fierce:
But as you gave to him a milder mind,
O bleſs him, bleſs him with a milder fate!

EVELINA.

Nor yet unheard let Evelina pour
Her pray'rs and tears. O hear a hapleſs maid,
That ev'n thro' half the years, her life has number'd,
Ev'n nine long years has drag'd a trembling being,
Beſet with pains and perils. Give her peace;
And, to endear it more, be that bleſt peace
Won by her brother's ſword. O bleſs his arm,
And bleſs his valiant followers, One, and all.

ELIDURUS *entering armed.*

Hear heav'n! and let this pure and virgin prayer
Plead ev'n for Elidurus, whoſe ſad ſoul
Cannot look up to your immortal thrones,
And urge his own requeſt: Elſe would he aſk,
That all the dangers of th' approaching fight
Might fall on him alone: That every ſpear
The Romans wield might at his breaſt be aim'd;
Each arrow darted on his rattling helm;
That ſo the brother of this beauteous maid,
Returning ſafe with victory and peace,
Might bear them to her boſom.

CHORUS.

Now riſe all,
And heav'n, that knows, what moſt ye ought to aſk,
Grant all ye ought to have. The ſtars on high

Are faded now, and darkneſs reigns o'er all.
Now is the dreadful hour, now will our torches
Glare with more livid horror, now our ſhrieks
And clanking arms will more appall the foe.
But heed, ye Bards, that for the ſign of onſet
Ye ſound the antienteſt of all your rhymes,
Whoſe birth tradition notes not, nor who fram'd
Its lofty ſtrains: The force of that high air
Did Julius feel, when, fir'd by it, our fathers
Firſt drove him recreant to his ſhips; and ill
Had far'd his ſecond landing, but that fate
Silenc'd the maſter Bard, who led the ſong.
Now forth, brave Pair! Go, with our bleſſing go;
Mute be the march, as ye aſcend the hill:
Then, when ye hear the ſound of our ſhrill trumpet,
Fall on the foe.

CARACTACUS.

Now glory be thy guide;
Pride of my ſoul, go forth and conquer.

EVELINA.

Brother,
Yet one embrace. O thou much honour'd Stranger,
I charge thee, fight by my dear brother's ſide,
And ſhield him from the foe; for he is brave,
And will with bold and well-directed arm
Return thy ſuccour.

[*Exeunt Arviragus and Elidurus.*

CHORUS.

Now, ye Prieſts, with ſpeed
Strew on the altar's height your ſacred leaves,

And light the morning flame. But why is this?
Why doth our brother Mador ſnatch his harp
From yonder bough? why this way bend his ſtep?

CARACTACUS.

He is entranc'd. The fillet burſts, that bound
His liberal locks; his ſnowy veſtments fall
In ampler folds; and all his floating form
Doth ſeem to gliſten with divinity!
Yet is he ſpeechleſs. Say, thou Chief of Bards,
What is there in this airy vacancy,
That thou with fiery and irregular glance
Shouldſt ſcan thus wildly? wherefore heaves thy breaſt?
Why ſtarts——

ODE.

I. 1.

HARK! heard ye not yon footſtep dread,
That ſhook the earth with thund'ring tread?
'Twas Death.—In haſte
The Warrior paſt;
High tower'd his helmed head:
I mark'd his mail, I mark'd his ſhield,
I 'ſpy'd the ſparkling of his ſpear,
I ſaw his giant-arm the falchion wield;
Wide wav'd the bick'ring blade, and fir'd the angry air.

I. 2.

On me (he cry'd) my Britons, wait.
To lead you to the field of fate
I come: Yon car,
That cleaves the air,
Deſcends to throne my ſtate;

I mount your Champion and your God.
My proud ſteeds neigh beneath the thong:
Hark! to my wheels of braſs, that rattle loud!
Hark! to my * clarion ſhrill, that brays the woods among!

1. 3.

Fear not now the fever's fire,
Fear not now the death-bed groan,
Pangs that torture, pains that tire,
Bed-rid age with feeble moan:
Theſe domeſtic terrors wait
Hourly at my palace gate;
And when o'er ſlothful realms my rod I wave,
Theſe on the tyrant king and coward ſlave
Ruſh with vindictive rage, and drag them to their grave.

2. 1.

But you, my Sons, at this high hour
Shall ſhare the fulneſs of my power:
From all your bows,
In level'd rows,
My own dread ſhafts ſhall ſhower.
Go then to conqueſt, gladly go,
Deal forth my dole of deſtiny,
With all my fury daſh the trembling foe
Down to thoſe darkſome dens, where Rome's pale ſpectres lie.

2. 2.

Where creeps the ninefold ſtream profound
Her black inexorable round,

* Here one of the Druids blows the ſacred trumpet.

And on the bank,
To willows dank,
The ſhivering ghoſts are bound.
Twelve thouſand creſcents all ſhall ſwell
To full-orb'd pride, and all decline,
Ere they again in life's gay manſions dwell:
Not ſuch the meed that crowns the ſons of freedom's line.

2. 3.

No, my Britons! battle ſlain,
Rapture gilds your parting hour:
I, that all deſpotic reign,
Claim but there a moment's power.
Swiftly the ſoul of Britiſh flame
Animates ſome kindred frame,
Swiftly to life and light triumphant flies,
Exults again in martial ecſtacies,
Again for freedom fights, again for freedom dies.

CARACTACUS.

It does, it does! unconquer'd, undiſmaid,
The Britiſh ſoul revives—Champion, lead on,
I follow—give me way. Some bleſſed ſhaft
Will rid me of this clog of cumb'rous age;
And I again ſhall in ſome happier mould
Riſe to redeem my country.

CHORUS.

Stay thee, Prince,
And mark what clear and amber-ſkirted clouds
Riſe from the altar's verge, and cleave the ſkies:
O 'tis a proſperous omen! Soon expect
To hear glad tidings.

CARACTACUS.

I will ſend them to thee.

CHORUS.

But ſee, a Bard approaches, and he bears them:
Elſe is his eye no herald to his heart.

BARD, CHORUS, CARACTACUS.

CARACTACUS.

Speedily tell thy tale.

BARD.

A tale like mine,
I truſt your ears will willingly purſue
Thro' each glad circumſtance. Firſt, Monarch, learn,
The Roman troop is fled.

CHORUS.

Great gods, we thank ye!

CARACTACUS.

Fought they not ere they fled? O tell me all.

BARD.

Silent, as night, that wrapt us in her veil,
We pac'd up yonder hill, whoſe woody ridge
O'erhung the ambuſh'd foe. No ſound was heard,
Step felt, or ſight deſcry'd: for ſafely hid,
Beneath the purple pall of ſacrifice
Did ſleep our holy fire, nor ſaw the air,
Till to that paſs we came, where whilom Brute
Planted his five hoar altars. To our rites
Then ſwift we haſted, and in one ſhort moment
Each rocky pile was cloth'd with livid flame.
Near each a white rob'd Druid, whoſe ſtern voice

Thunder'd deep execrations on the foe.
Now wak'd our horrid ſymphony, now all
Our harps terrific rang: Meanwhile the grove
Trembled, the altars ſhook, and thro' our ranks
Our ſacred ſiſters ruſh'd in ſable robes,
With hair diſhevel'd, and funereal brands
Hurl'd round with menacing fury. On they ruſh'd
In fierce and frantic mood, as is their wont
Amid the magic rites, they do to night
In our deep dens below. Motions like theſe
Were never dar'd before in open air!

CHORUS.

Did I not ſay we had a power within us,
That might appall ev'n Romans?

BARD.

And it did.
They ſtood agaſt, and to our vollied darts,
That thick as hail fell on their helms and corſlets,
Scarce rais'd a warding ſhield. The ſacred trumpet
Then rent the air, and inſtant at the ſignal
Ruſh'd down Arviragus with all our vaſſals;
A hot, but ſhort-liv'd, conflict then enſued:
For ſoon they fled. I ſaw the Romans fly,
Before I left the field.

CARACTACUS.

My ſon purſued?

BARD.

The prince and Elidurus, like twin lions,
Did ſide by ſide engage. Death ſeem'd to guide
Their ſwords, no ſtroke fell fruitleſs, every wound
Gave him a victim,

CARACTACUS.

Thus my friend Ebrancus!
Ill-fated prince! didſt thou and I in youth
Unite our valours. In his prime he fell,
On Conway's banks. I ſaw him fall, and ſlew
His murderer.—But how far did they purſue?

BARD.

Ev'n to the ſhips: For I deſcry'd the rout,
Far as the twilight gleam would aid my ſight.

CARACTACUS.

Now, thanks to the bright ſtar that rul'd his birth;
Yes, he will ſoon return to claim my bleſſing,
And he ſhall have it pour'd in tears of joy
On his bold breaſt! methought, I heard a ſtep:
Is it not his?

BARD.

'Tis ſome of our own train,
And, as I think, they lead ſix Romans captive.

CHORUS, CARACTACUS, CAPTIVES.

My brethren, bear the priſoners to the cavern,
Till we demand them.

CARACTACUS.

Pauſe ye yet a while.
They ſeem of bold demeanor, and have helms,
That ſpeak them leaders. Hear me, Romans, hear.
That you are captives, is the chance of war:
Yet captives as ye are, in Britain's eye

You are not ſlaves. Barbarians tho' you calls us,
We know the native rights, man claims from man,
And therefore never ſhall we gall your necks
With chains, or drag you at our ſcythed cars
In arrogance of triumph. Nor, till taught
By Rome (what Britain ſure ſhould ſcorn to learn)
Her avarice, will we barter ye for gold.
True ye are captives, and our country's ſafety
Forbids, we give you back to liberty:
We give ye therefore to the immortal gods,
To them we lift ye in the radiant cloud
Of ſacrifice. They may in limbs of freedom
Replace your free-born ſouls, and their high mercy
Haply ſhall to ſome better world advance you;
Or elſe in this reſtore that golden gift,
Which loſt, leaves life a burden. Does there breathe
A wretch ſo 'pall'd with the vain fear of death
Can call this cruelty? 'tis love, 'tis mercy,
And grant, ye gods, if ere I'm made a captive
I meet the like fair treatment from the foe,
Whoſe ſtronger ſtar quells mine. Now lead them on,
And, while they live, treat them, as men ſhould men,
And not, as Rome treats Britain. [*Exeunt Captives.*
Druid, theſe,
Ev'n ſhould their chief eſcape, may blaze to-morrow
Our gratitude——Whence was that ſhriek?

EVELINA, CARACTACUS, CHORUS.

My father,
Support me, take me trembling to your arms;
All is not well. Ah me, my fears o'ercome me!

CARACTACUS.

What means my child?

EVELINA.

Alas! we are betray'd.
Ev'n now, as wand'ring in yon eaſtern grove
I call'd the gods to aid us, the dread ſound
Of many haſty ſteps did meet mine ear:
This way they preſt.

CARACTACUS.

Daughter, thy fears are vain.

EVELINA.

Methought I ſaw the flame of lighted brands,
And what did glitter to my dazzled ſight,
Like ſwords and helms.

CARACTACUS.

All, all the feeble coinage
Of maiden fear.

EVELINA.

Nay, if mine ear miſtook not,
I heard the traitor's voice, who that way 'ſcap'd,
Calling to arms.

CARACTACUS.

Away with idle terrors!
Know, thy brave brother's creſt is crown'd with conqueſt,

The Romans fled, their leaders are our captives;
Smile, my lov'd child, and imitate the ſun,
That riſes ruddy from behind yon oaks
To hail him victor.

CHORUS.

That the riſing ſun!
O horror! horror! ſacrilegious fires
Devour our groves: They blaze, they blaze!
O ſound
The trump again; recall the prince, or all
Is loſt!

CARACTACUS.

Druid, where is thy fortitude?
Do not I live? Is not this holy ſword
Firm in my graſp? I will preſerve your groves.
Britons, I go: Let thoſe, that dare die nobly,
Follow my ſtep. [*Exit Caractacus.*

EVELINA.

O whither does he go?
Return, return: Ye holy men, recall him.
What is his arm againſt a hoſt of Romans?
O I have loſt a father!

CHORUS.

Ruthleſs gods!
Ye take away our ſouls: A general panic
Reigns thro' the grove. O fly, my brethren, fly,
To aid the king, fly to preſerve your altars!
Alas! 'tis all in vain; our fate is fixt.
Look there, look there, thou miſerable maid!
Behold thy bleeding brother.

ARVIRAGUS, ELIDURUS, EVELINA, CHORUS.

Thanks, good youth!
Safe haſt thou brought me to that holy ſpot,
Where I did wiſh to die. Support me ſtill.
O, I am ſick to death. Yet one ſtep more:
Now lay me gently down. I would drag out
This life, tho' at ſome coſt of throbs and pangs,
Juſt long enough to claim my father's bleſſing,
And ſigh my laſt breath in my ſiſter's arms.
—And here ſhe kneels, poor maid! all dumb with grief.
Reſtrain thy ſorrow, gentleſt Evelina,
True thou doſt ſee me bleed; I bleed to death.

EVELINA.

Sayſt thou to death? O gods! the barbed ſhaft
Is buried in his breaſt. Yes, he muſt die;
And I, alas! am doom'd to ſee him die.
Where are your healing arts, medicinal herbs,
Ye holy men, your wonder-working ſpells?
Pluck me but out this ſhaft, ſtaunch but this blood,
And I will call down bleſſings on your heads
With ſuch a fervency—And can ye not!
Then let me beg you on my bended knee,
Give to my miſery ſome opiate drug,
May ſhut up all my ſenſes.—Yes, good fathers,
Mingle the potion ſo, that it may kill me
Juſt at the inſtant, this poor languiſher
Heaves his laſt ſigh.

ARVIRAGUS.

Talk not thus wildly, ſiſter,
Think on our father's age———

EVELINA.

Alas! my brother!
We have no father now; or if we have,
He is a captive.

ARVIRAGUS.

Captive! O my wound!
It ſtings me now——But is it ſo?
[*turning to the Chorus.*

CHORUS.

Alas!
We know no more, ſave that he ſallied ſingle
To meet the foe, whoſe unexpected hoſt
Round by the eaſt had wound their fraudful march,
And fir'd our groves.

ELIDURUS.

O fatal, fatal valour!
Then is he ſeiz'd, or ſlain.

ARVIRAGUS.

Too ſure he is!
Druid, not half the Romans met our ſwords;
We found the fraud too late: the reſt are yonder.

CHORUS.

How could they gain the paſs?

ARVIRAGUS.

The wretch, that fled
That way, return'd, conducting half their powers;
And—But thy pardon, youth, I will not wound thee,
He is thy brother.

ELIDURUS.

Thus my honeſt ſword
Shall force the blood from the deteſted heart,
That holds alliance with him.

ARVIRAGUS.

Elidurus,
Hold, on our friendſhip, hold. Thou noble youth,
Look on this innocent maid. She muſt to Rome,
Captive to Rome. Thou ſeeſt warm life flow from me,
Ere long ſhe'll have no brother. Heav'n's my witneſs,
I do not wiſh, that thou ſhouldſt live the ſlave
Of Rome: But yet ſhe is my ſiſter.

ELIDURUS.

Prince,
Thou urgeſt that, might make me drag an age
In fetters worſe than Roman. I will live,
And while I live———

Enter BARD.

Fly to your caverns, Druids,
The grove's beſet around. The chief approaches.

CHORUS.

Let him approach, we will confront his pride,
The chief that rules amid the groves of Mona
Has not to fear his fury. What tho' age
Slackens our ſinews; what tho' ſhield, and ſword
Give not their iron aid to guard our body;

Yet virtue arms our ſoul, and 'gainſt that panoply
What 'vails the rage of robbers. Let him come.

ARVIRAGUS.

I faint apace.—Ye venerable men,
If ye can ſave this body from pollution,
If ye can tomb me in this ſacred place,
I truſt, ye will. I fought to ſave theſe groves,
And, fruitleſs tho' I fought, ſome grateful oak,
I truſt, will ſpread its reverential gloom
O'er my pale aſhes.—Ah! that pang was death!
My ſiſter, Oh!——— [*dies.*

ELIDURUS.

She faints! Ah raiſe her!———

EVELINA.

Yes,
Now he is dead. I felt his ſpirit go
In a cold ſigh, and as it paſt, methought
It paus'd a while, and trembled on my lips!
Take me not from him: Breathleſs as he is,
He is my brother ſtill, and if the gods
Do pleaſe to grace him with ſome happier being,
They ne'er can give to him a fonder ſiſter.

CHORUS.

Brethren, ſurround the corſe, and, ere the foe
Approaches, chaunt with meet ſolemnity
That grateful dirge your dying champion claims.

SEMICHORUS.

Lo, where incumbent o'er the ſhade
Rome's ravening eagle bows her beaked head!
Yet while a moment fate affords,
While yet a moment freedom ſtays,

That moment, which outweighs
Eternity's unmeaſur'd hoards,
Shall Mona's grateful Bards employ
To hymn their godlike Hero to the ſky.

SEMICHORUS.

Ring out, ye mortal ſtrings;
Anſwer thou heav'nly harp, inſtinct with ſpirit all,
That o'er the jaſper arch ſelf-warbling ſwings
Of bleſt Andraſte's throne:
Thy ſacred ſounds alone
Can celebrate the fall
Of bold Arviragus.—[*Enter Aulus Didius and Romans.*

AULUS DIDIUS, CHORUS, EVELINA, ELIDURUS.

Ye bloody prieſts,
Behold, we burſt on your infernal rites,
And bid ye pauſe. Inſtant reſtore our ſoldiers,
Nor hope that ſuperſtition's ruthleſs ſtep
Shall wade in Roman gore. Ye ſavage men,
Did not our laws give licence to all faiths,
We would o'erturn your altars, headlong heave
Theſe ſhapeleſs ſymbols of your barbarous gods,
And let the golden ſun into your caves.

CHORUS.

Servant of Cæſar, has thine impious tongue
Spent the black venom of thy blaſphemy?
It has. Then take our curſes on thine head,
Ev'n his fell curſes, who doth reign in Mona,
Vicegerent of thoſe gods thy pride inſults,

AULUS DIDIUS.

Bold prieſt, I ſcorn thy curſes, and thyſelf.
Soldiers, go ſearch the caves, and free the priſoners.
Take heed, you ſeize Caractacus alive.
Arreſt yon youth; load him with heavieſt irons,
He ſhall to Cæſar anſwer for his crime.

ELIDURUS.

I ſtand prepar'd to triumph in my crime.

AULUS DIDIUS.

'Tis well, proud boy———
Look to the beauteous maid, [*to the ſoldiers.*
That tranc'd in grief, bends o'er yon bleeding corſe,
Reſpect her ſorrows.

EVELINA.

Hence ye barbarous men,
Ye ſhall not take him weltring thus in blood,
To ſhew at Rome, what Britiſh virtue was.
Avaunt! The breathleſs body that you touch
Was once Arviragus!

AULUS DIDIUS.

Fear us not, princeſs,
We reverence the dead.

CHORUS.

Would too to heav'n,
Ye reverenc'd the gods but ev'n enough
Not to debaſe with ſlavery's cruel chain,
What they created free.

AULUS DIDIUS.

The Romans fight
Not to enſlave, but humanize the world.

CHORUS.

Go too, we will not parley with thee, Roman:
Inſtant pronounce our doom.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Hear it, and thank us.
This once our clemency ſhall ſpare your groves,
If at our call ye yield the Britiſh king:
Yet learn, when next ye aid the foes of Cæſar,
That each old oak, whoſe ſolemn gloom ye boaſt,
Shall bow beneath our axes.

CHORUS.

Be they blaſted,
Whene'er their ſhade forgets to ſhelter virtue.

Enter BARD.

Mourn, Mona, mourn. Caractacus is captive!
And doſt thou ſmile, falſe Roman? do not think
He fell an eaſy prey. Know, ere he yielded,
Thy braveſt veterans bled. He too, thy ſpy,
The baſe Brigantian prince, hath ſeal'd his fraud
With death. Burſting thro' armed ranks, that hemm'd
The caitiff round, the brave Caractacus
Seiz'd his falſe throat; and as he gave him death
Indignant thunder'd, 'Thus is my laſt ſtroke
'The ſtroke of juſtice.' Numbers then oppreſt him:
I ſaw the ſlave, that cowardly behind
Pinion'd his arms; I ſaw the ſacred ſword
Writh'd from his graſp: I ſaw, what now ye ſee,
Inglorious ſight! thoſe barbarous bonds upon him.

CARACTACUS, AULUS DIDIUS, CHORUS, &c.

Romans, methinks the malice of your tyrant
Might furniſh heavier chains. Old as I am
And wither'd as ye ſee theſe war-worn limbs,
Truſt me, they ſhall ſupport the weightieſt load
Injuſtice dares impoſe.
Proud-creſted ſoldier! [*to Didius.*
Who ſeemſt the maſter-mover in this buſineſs,
Say, doſt thou read leſs terror on my brow,
Than when thou met'ſt me in the fields of war
Heading my nations? No, my free-born ſoul
Has ſcorn ſtill left to ſparkle thro' theſe eyes,
And frown defiance on thee.
Is it thus! [*ſeeing his ſon's body.*
Then I'm indeed a captive. Mighty gods!
My ſoul, my ſoul ſubmits: Patient it bears
The ponderous load of grief ye heap upon it.
Yes, it will grovel in this ſhatter'd breaſt,
And be the ſad tame thing, it ought to be
Coopt in a ſervile body.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Droop not, king.
When Claudius, the great maſter of the world,
Shall hear the noble ſtory of thy valour,
His pity——

CARACTACUS.

Can a Roman pity, ſoldier?
And if he can, gods! muſt a Briton bear it?

Arviragus, my bold, my breathleſs boy,
Thou haſt eſcap'd ſuch pity: thou art free.
Here in high Mona ſhall thy noble limbs
Reſt in a noble grave; poſterity
Shall to thy tomb with annual reverence bring
Sepulchral ſtones, and pile them to the clouds;
Whilſt mine———

AULUS DIDIUS.

The morn doth haſten our departure.
Prepare thee, king, to go: A fav'ring gale
Now ſwells our ſails.

CARACTACUS.

Inhuman, that thou art!
Doſt thou deny a moment for a father
To ſhed a few warm tears o'er his dead ſon?
I tell thee, chief, this act might claim a life
To do it duly; even a longer life,
Than ſorrow ever ſuffer'd. Cruel man!
And thou denieſt me moments. Be it ſo.
I know you Romans weep not for your children;
You triumph o'er your tears, and think it valour:
I triumph in my tears. Yes, beſt-lov'd boy,
Yes, I can weep, can fall upon thy corſe,
And I can tear my hairs, theſe few grey hairs,
The only honours war and age have left me.
Ah ſon! thou mightſt have rul'd o'er many nations,
As did thy royal anceſtry: But I,
Raſh that I was, ne'er knew the golden curb
Diſcretion hangs on brav'ry: Elſe perchance
Theſe men, that faſten fetters on thy father,
Had ſu'd to him for peace, and claim'd his friendſhip.

AULUS DIDIUS.

But thou waſt ſtill implacable to Rome,
And ſcorn'd her friendſhip.

CARACTACUS *ſtarting up from the body.*

Soldier, I had arms,
Had neighing ſteeds to whirl my iron cars,
Had wealth, dominion. Doſt thou wonder, Roman,
I fought to ſave them? What if Cæſar aims
To lord it univerſal o'er the world,
Shall the world tamely crouch at Cæſar's footſtool?

AULUS DIDIUS.

Read in thy fate our anſwer. Yet if ſooner
Thy pride had yielded——

CARACTACUS.

Thank thy gods, I did not.
Had it been ſo, the glory of thy maſter,
Like my misfortunes, had been ſhort and trivial,
Oblivion's ready prey: Now after ſtruggling
Nine years, and that right bravely 'gainſt a tyrant,
I am his ſlave to treat as ſeems him good;
If cruelly, 'twill be an eaſy taſk
To bow a wretch, alas! how bow'd already!
Down to the duſt: If well, his clemency,
When trick'd and varniſh'd by your gloſſing pen-
men,
Will ſhine in honour's annals, and adorn
Himſelf; it boots not me. Look there, look there,
The ſlave that ſhot that dart, left not a hope
For loſt Caractacus! Ariſe, my daughter.
Alas! poor prince; art thou too in vile fetters?

[*to Elidurus.*

Come hither, youth: Be thou to me a ſon,
To her a brother. Thus with trembling arms
I lead ye forth; children, we go to Rome.
Weepſt thou, my girl? I prithee hoard thy tears
For the ſad meeting of thy captive mother:
For we have much to tell her, much to ſay
Of theſe good men, who nurtur'd us in Mona;
Much of the fraud and malice, that purſued us;
Much of her ſon, who pour'd his precious blood
To ſave his ſire and ſiſter: Thinkſt thou, maid,
Her gentleneſs can hear the tale, and live?
And yet ſhe muſt. O gods, I grow a talker!
Grief and old age are ever full of words:
But I'll be mute. Adieu! ye holy men;
Yet one look more—Now lead us hence for ever.

THE END.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE few following quotations, from ancient authors, are here thrown together, in order to ſupport and explain ſome paſſages in the Drama, that reſpect the manners of the Druids; and which, the general account of their cuſtoms, to be found in our hiſtories of Britain, does not include.

Page 2. ℣. 15.

On the left.
Reſide the * ſages ſkill'd in nature's lore:

* *i. e.* The Euvates; one of the three claſſes of the Druids, according to Am. Marcellinus. Studia liberalium doctrinarum inchoata per Bardos, Euvates, & Druidas. This claſs, Strabo tells us, had the care of the ſacrifices, and ſtudied natural philoſophy; which here, by *the changeful univerſe*, is ſhewn to be on Pythagorean principles. Whenever the *Prieſts* are mentioned in the ſubſequent parts of the Drama, this order of men is intended to be meant, as diſtinguiſhed from the Druids and Bards.

Page 7. ℣. 7.

Thou ſhalt live;
Yet ſhalt thou live an interdicted wretch,
All rights of nature cancell'd.

Alluding to the Druidical power of excommunication, mentioned by Cæſar. Si quis aut privatus, aut publicus, eorum decreto non ſtetit, ſacri-

ficiis interdicunt. Hæc pœna apud eos eſt graviſſima. Quibus ita eſt interdictum, ii numero impiorum ac ſceleratorum habentur——neque iis petentibus jus redditur, neque honos ullus communicatur. C. Comment. Lib. vi.

P. 10. ℣. 2.

Are the milk-white ſteers prepar'd?

In the minute deſcription which Pliny gives us of the ceremony of gathering the miſletoe, he tells us, they ſacrificed two white bulls. See Pliny's Natural Hiſtory, L. 16. c. 44. which Drayton, in his Polyolbion, thus verſifies.

Sometimes within my ſhades, in many an ancient wood,
Whoſe often-twined tops great Phœbus' fires withſtood,
The fearleſs Britiſh prieſts, under an aged oak,
Taking a milk-white bull, unſtrained with the yoke,
And with an ax of gold, from that Jove-ſacred tree
The miſletoe cut down; then with a bended knee
On th' unhew'd altar laid, put to the hallow'd fires;
And whilſt in the ſharp flame the trembling fleſh expires,
As their ſtrong fury mov'd (when all the reſt adore)
Pronouncing their deſires the ſacrifice before,
Up to th' eternal heav'n their bloodied hands did rear:
And whilſt the murm'ring woods ev'n ſhudder'd as with fear,
Preach'd to the beardleſs youth the ſoul's immortal ſtate;

To other bodies ſtill how it ſhould tranſmigrate,
That to contempt of death them ſtrongly did excite. Ninth Song.

Page 10. ℣. 19.
Where our matron ſiſter dwells.

The exiſtence of female Druids ſeems aſcertained by Tacitus, in his deſcription of the final deſtruction of Mona by Paulinus Suetonius. Stabat pro litore diverſa acies denſa armis viriſque *intercurſantibus fœminis*, &c. Alſo by the known ſtory of Diocleſian, on which Fletcher formed a play, called the Propheteſs.

Page 10. ℣. 21.
And the potent adder-ſtone.

The ovum anguinum, or ſerpent's egg; a famous Druidical amulet, thus circumſtantially deſcribed by Pliny.——Præterea eſt ovorum genus in magna Galliarum fama, omiſſum Græcis. Angues innumeri æſtate convoluti, ſalivis faucium corporumque ſpumis artifici complexu glomerantur; anguinum appellatur. Druidæ ſibilis id dicunt in ſublime jactari, ſagoque oportere intercipi, ne tellurem attingat. Profugere raptorem equo, ſerpentes enim inſequi, donec arceantur amnis alicujus interventu, &c. Nat. Hiſt. Lib. xxix. c. 3.

There are remains of this ſuperſtition ſtill, both in the north and weſt parts of our iſland. For Lhwyd, the author of the Archeologia, writes thus to Rowland; ſee Mona Antiqua, p. 338. "The "Druid doctrine about the *Glain Neidr*, obtains "very much thro' all Scotland, as well lowlands

" as highlands; but there is not a word of it in " this kingdom (Ireland); where, as there are no " ſnakes, they could not propagate it. Beſides " ſnake-ſtones, the highlanders have their ſnail-" ſtones, paddock-ſtones, &c. to all which they " attribute their ſeveral virtues, and wear them as " amulets." And in another letter he writes, " The " Corniſh retain variety of charms, and have ſtill, " towards the land's-end, the amulet of Maen " Magal, and Glain Neidr, which latter they call " a Milpreu, or Melpreu, and have a charm for " the ſnake to make it, when they have found " one aſleep, and ſtruck a hazel wand in the centre " of her ſpires."

Page 25. ℣. 5.

Have the milk white ſteeds
Unrein'd, and, neighing, pranc'd with fa-
v'ring ſteps.

The few and imperfect accounts antiquity gives us of ceremonies, &c. which are unqueſtionably Druidical, makes it neceſſary in this, and in other places of the Drama, to have recourſe to Tacitus's account of the Germans, amongſt whom, if there were really no eſtabliſhed Druids, there was certainly a great correſpondency, in religious opinions, with the Gauls and Britons. The paſſage here alluded to is taken from his 10th chapter. Proprium gentis, equorumque quoque præſagia ac monitus experiri. Publice aluntur iiſdem nemoribus ac lucis, candidi & nullo mortali opere contacti, quos preſſos ſacro curru, ſacerdos ac rex, vel princeps civitatis comitantur, hinnitus & fremitus obſervant, nec ulli auſpicio major fides non ſolum apud plebem, ſed apud proceres, apud ſacerdotes.

Page 26. ℣. 2.

Thou art a king, a ſov'reign o'er frail man:
I am a Druid, ſervant of the gods.
Such ſervice is above ſuch ſovereignty.

The ſupreme authority of the Druids over their kings, is thus aſcertained by Dion. Chryſoſtom. Κελτοι δε ους ονομαζουσι Δρυιδας, και τουτους περι Μαντικην οντας και την αλλην ζοφιαν, ων ανευ, τοις βασιλευσιν ουδεν εξην πραττειν, ουδε βουλευεσθαι, ωστε το μεν αληθες εκεινους αρχειν τους δε βασιλεας αυτων υπηρετας και διακονους γινεσθαι της γνωμης, εν θρονοις καθημενους, και οικιας μεγαλας οικουντας, και πολυτιμως ευωχουμενους. Helmodus alſo de Slavis, l. ii. c. 12. aſſerts, Rex apud eos modicæ eſt æſtimationis in comparatione flaminis.

Page 26. ℣. 17.

The time ſhall come, when deſtiny and death,
Thron'd in a burning car.

Strabo, and other writers, tell us, the Druids taught, that the world was finally to be deſtroyed by fire; upon which this allegory is founded.

Page 34. ℣. 1.

The gods, my brethren,
Have wak'd theſe doubts in the untainted breaſt
Of this mild maiden.

Ineſſe enim ſanctum quid & providum fœminis putant. Nec aut conſilia ipſorum aſpernantur, aut reſponſa negant. Tac. de morib. Germ. and Strabo to the like purpoſe, l. vii. Απαντες γαρ της δεισιδαιμονιας αρχηγους οιονται τας γυναικας.

Page 38. ℣. 13.

Behold yon huge
And unhewn ſphere of living adamant.

This is meant to deſcribe the rocking-ſtone, of which there are ſeveral ſtill to be ſeen in Wales, Cornwall, and Derbyſhire. They are univerſally thought, by antiquarians, to be Druid monuments; and Mr. Toland thinks, "that the Druids made "the people believe that they only could move "them, and that by a miracle, by which they "condemned or acquitted the accuſed, and often "brought criminals to confeſs what could in no "other way be extorted from them." 'Twas this conjecture which gave the hint for this piece of machinery. The reader may find a deſcription of one of theſe rocking-ſtones in Camden's Britannia, in his account of Pembrokeſhire; and alſo ſeveral in Borlaſe's hiſtory of Cornwall.

Page 63. ℣. 19.

——And its name
TRIFINGUS.

The name of the inchanted ſword in the Hervarer Saga.

Page 63. ℣. 25.

By the bright circle of the golden ſun.

This adjuration is taken from the literal form of the old Druidical oath, which they adminiſtered to their diſciples; and which the learned Selden, in Prolog. de Diis Syr. gives us from Vettius Valens Antiochenus, l. vii. It is as follows: Εντυγχανοντας ορκιζω ΗΛΙΟΥ μεν ιερον κυκλον και ΣΕΛΗΝΗΣ ανωμαλως δρομους των τε λοιπων αστερων δυναμεις και κυκλον ΔΥΟΚΑΙΔΕΚΑ ΖΩΔΙΩΝ εν αποκρυφοις ταυτα

εχειν και τοις απαιδευτοις η αμυητοις μη μεταδιδοναι, τιμην τε και μνημην τω εισηγησαμενω απονεμειν, &c.

Page 71. ℣. 20.

Near each a white-rob'd Druid, whoſe
ſtern voice
Thunder'd deep execrations on the foe.

This account is taken from what hiſtory tells us did really happen ſome years after, when the groves of Mona were deſtroyed by Suetonius Paulinus. Igitur Monam inſulam incolis validam, & receptaculum perfugarum aggredi parat, naveſque fabricatur plano alveo, adverſus breve litus & incertum. Sic Pedes; equites vado ſecuti, aut altiores inter undas, adnantes equis tranſmiſere. Stabat pro litore diverſa acies denſa armis viriſque, intercurſantibus fœminis: in modum Furiarum, veſte ferali crinibus dejectis *faces* præferebant. Druidæ circum, preces diras ſublatis ad cœlum manibus fundentes, novitate aſpectus perculere milites ut quaſi hærentibus membris, immobile corpus vulneribus præberent. Dein cohortationibus ducis, & ſe ipſi ſtimulantes ne muliebre & fanaticum agmen paveſcerent, inferunt ſigna, ſternuntque obvios & igni ſuo involvunt. Tac. Ann. l. xiv. c. 29.

Page 81. ℣. 19.

Theſe ſhapeleſs ſymbols of your barbarous
gods.

The Druids did not really worſhip the divinity under any ſymbol. But this is put intentionally into the mouth of the Roman, as miſtaking the rude ſtones placed round the grove, for idols. Thus Lucan in his beautiful deſcription of a Druid grove,

——————ſimulacraque mœſta deorum
Arte carent cæſiſque extant informia truncis.
Phar. Lib. iii.

Some imagery from the ſame deſcription is alſo borrowed in the opening of the Drama.

Page 86. ℣. 3.

——————Soldier I had arms.

This paſſage, and ſome others in this ſcene, are taken from Caractacus's famous ſpeech in Tacitus, before the throne of Claudius; but here adapted to his dramatic character.